Reader's digest

APRIL 2015

₹75

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Reader's digest

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Mr. K. V. Chaudhari receiving his cheque from Mr. G. L. Ravik Kumar, India Today Group

The 2014 Sweepstakes award ceremony was a hit. The winners, people just like you, who tried their luck were taken by surprise and overjoyed by their good fortune. Here's a glimpse into the celebrations held in New Delhi on 27th February 2015.

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Ms. Deepa Alex receiving her prize from Mr. G. L. Ravik Kumar, India Today Group

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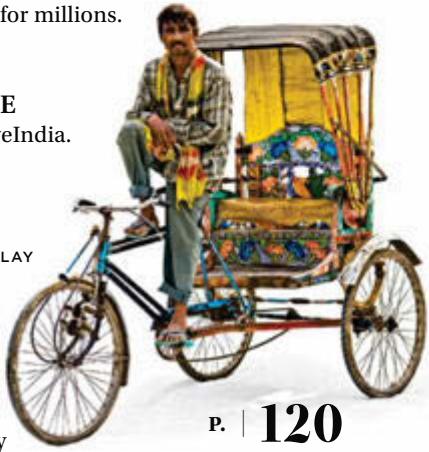

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY RALPH SMITH

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No. 1 selling
Scar and Stretch Marks
product in
17 countries*

"After endless procrastination, I finally committed to doing something constructive about the extra 10 kgs I'd being carrying around with me since my teenage years. I started eating healthily, began exercising and before long, I started seeing results. I felt incredibly motivated until I noticed stretch marks on my hips and stomach. Luckily a close friend recommended Bio-Oil (she had used it throughout her pregnancy for stretch marks). I have now reached my goal weight and the results have been unbelievable! Thank you Bio-Oil for saving my day!" Vanessa

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*As per independent studies in respective territories. Based on customer perception.

Editor's Note

Money or Ideas: Be a Giver

IT IS BILL GATES'S MICROSOFT that created the computer program with which I'm writing this. And, in case you didn't know, he and his wife Melinda have in recent years been relentlessly working for the world's poor and funding medical research. If polio has been eradicated in India, we really have to thank them for it. It is admirable when the world's richest man, having built a company that changed our lives, takes a back seat from his business affairs to care for the sick and the underprivileged.

Now, there are many—economists included—who believe that some nations are "basket cases," where any amount of financial aid is an insane waste. But see what Bill and Melinda Gates, who have first-hand knowledge of dealing with the world's poorest, have to say about it in "Three Myths About the World's Poor" (page 50).

You don't have to be anywhere as wealthy as the Gateses to be able to help others. I have always felt that if a majority of middle- and upper-class Indians—that's you and I—set aside even two percent of our annual earnings, we'd together be able to give away much more than the total of all the money donated by a handful of generous billionaires. We need to build a nationwide tradition of giving, but there are many among us who are not sure how to give, or are worried their money will be misused. So our major Indian story (page 84) is about a kind-hearted organization. GiveIndia's growing family of donors know precisely who benefits from their money.

All this brings us to this month's "Dreamers" section (page 22) and the Cover Story (page 78). They both focus on genius innovations that are helping the world's developing areas. Your native village, or a village near you, could likely benefit from them. Or maybe you'll be so inspired, you'll come up with your own idea to save the world!

Mohan Sivanand

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FOR MANAGING TOMORROW

Reader's digest

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Letters

COMMENTS ON OUR RECENT ISSUES

TIRED OR SICK?

Are our doctors [Are You Tired or Sick? February] even in multi-specialty hospitals, informed enough to diagnose a problem holistically? Will they check my tiredness for all the seven causes listed in the article? Doctors must stay updated and use such knowledge with utmost integrity.

GOPINATH S., *Bengaluru*

Having snored restlessly for over 30 years, I underwent a sleep study and was diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea, one of the seven causes of tiredness described in the article. A mask now keeps my airway free and I sleep peacefully. All snorers who feel tired during the day or wake up at night with a choking sensation should consult a sleep specialist.

MANJU BHATNAGAR, *Pune*

DAN BROWN CODE

It's intriguing to learn that novelist Dan Brown's mother was a deeply religious woman and his father a mathematician [Up Close, February]. As we face challenges created by fundamentalist forces, the interview is a reminder that both science and religion have a place in this world.

NIKITA KAUSHAL, *New Delhi*

CAN'T BEAR THIS!

It was terrible to read about the shocking mental and physical suffering polar bears are put through to provide cheap entertainment to humans [Caring for Bärle, February]. Isn't it ironic that teddy bears are showered with love and care while real ones are tortured at the circus?

CARMEN NORONHA, *Vasco da Gama, Goa*

ORGAN DONATION DILEMMA

We have to ensure the elimination of middlemen in organ donations [The Case of the Bone Marrow Buyer, February]. If donating a kidney is acceptable, why is buying prohibited by law? Is it not a thriving black market anyway?

DR S.S.N. RAO, *Jamshedpur*

Most people do not help with organ donations. So our laws should help

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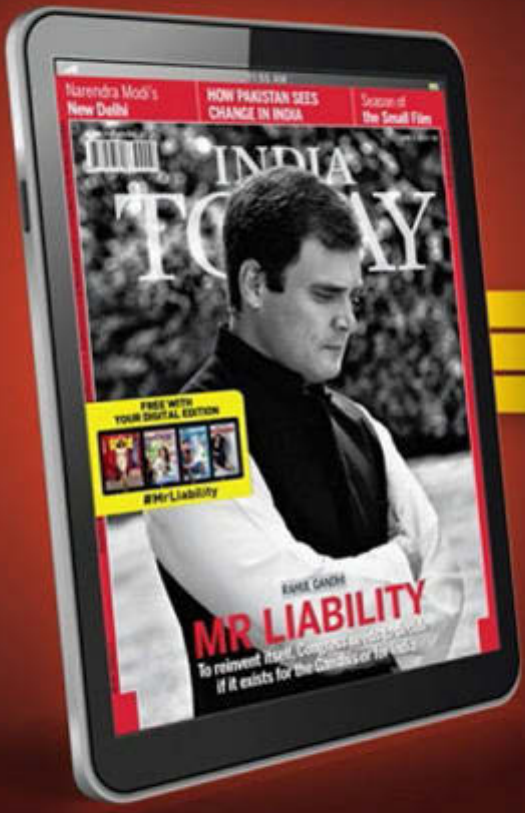

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both donor and patient. If the donor wants compensation, it should be allowed. It's the poor who are selling organs illegally, often at risk to their health.

K. VENKATA RAMANMA RAO, *via e-mail*

Instead of compensation for organ donors, the focus should instead be on clearing the misconceptions that people may have. Medical science, too, should ensure that organ donation is safe. Initially, people were scared to even donate blood. But it changed after a lot of awareness campaigns. **ANIL KUMAR JASWAL,** *Gagret, HP*

HELPFUL PASSWORDS

It surely helps when your password becomes a life coach [How a Password Changed My Life, February] I am alarmingly overweight and after reading the article, I changed my password of a social networking site to direct me into exercising 30 minutes daily. I have lost four kilos in three weeks. **S. ROSA AHMED,** *via e-mail*

ON DUTY, FROM HOME

I've worked for hours into the night or attended web conferences, while dear ones have gathered in my house for auspicious occasions. [Bringing the Office Home, February]. The very purpose of working from home then gets marred. But I would still vote for this necessary evil for the various problems it helps combat.

SHAWNA GUHA, *Kolkata*

WRITE & WIN!

THE JOB KILLER

Photographers at tourist spots now face unemployment, thanks to smartphones [The Web Is Making Jobs Dull, February]. And our professors do not hesitate to simply copy and paste notes from websites like *gradesaver.com* and *cliffnotes.com* to cover up for classroom discussions. They are even suggesting we just take these handouts and not come to class at all. **NEHA JHA,** *Bhubaneswar*

Ms Neha Jha gets our ₹1000 Best Letter prize. **—EDS**

What employees really need is a job that can blend in with their lives and values, thus keeping them not only happy, but also helping them grow emotionally. This would make them feel that the company needs them more than they need the job.

T.S. KARTHIK, *Chennai*

MUCKY EVEREST

The thrill of conquering Everest tempts even the inexperienced to hazard the climb [The Mess at the Top of the World, January]. Indeed, to keep Everest unpolluted, an international regulatory body needs to oversee expeditions.

P.C. SOCKEY, *Buldhana, Mah.*

The best letters discuss RD articles, offer criticism, share new ideas and experiences. Those chosen are edited and fact-checked. Please include your phone number and postal address.

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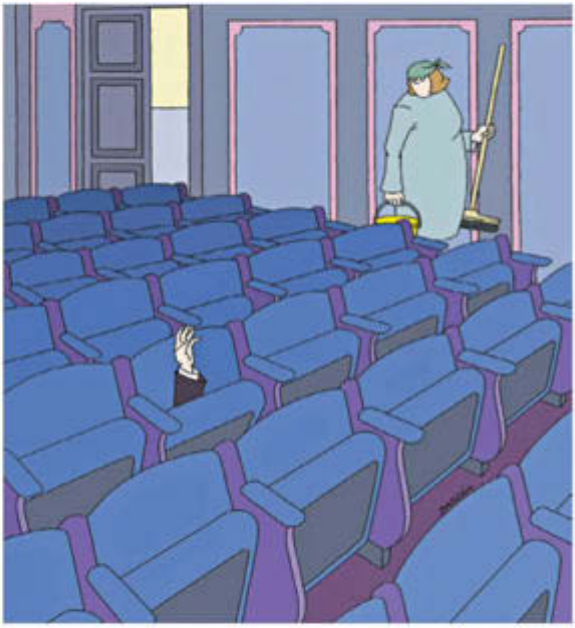
Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



IN A DARK and hazy room, peering into a crystal ball, the mystic delivered grave news to the woman.

"There's no easy way to tell you this, so I'll just be blunt," she said. "Prepare yourself to be a widow. Your husband will die a violent and very horrible death this year."

Shaken, the wife stared at the woman's lined face. She took a few deep breaths to compose herself. She met the fortune teller's gaze, steadied her voice and asked, "Will I be acquitted?"

From the internet

A ZOOKEEPER is ordering new animals. As he fills out the forms, he types "two mongeese." That doesn't look right, so he tries "two mongoose," then "two mongooses." Giving up, he types, "One mongoose, and while you're at it, send another one."

From the internet

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I WORK OUT RELIGIOUSLY—Christmas and Easter.

MATTHEW WOHLFARTH, *comedian*

A LOUD KNOCKING on the door wakes a man and his wife in the middle of a stormy night. The man opens the door to a stranger, who asks him for a push.

"No way!" says the husband, slamming the door shut in the stranger's face.

"Who was that?" calls his wife.

"Just some drunk asking for a push," he answers. "It's 3am and pouring with rain out there!"

"You should be ashamed," his wife replies. "Don't you remember that time when we broke down and those two guys helped us out? You should go and help him."

Sighing, the man pulls on his coat and heads out into the pouring rain.

"Hello?" he calls out in the dark. "Do you still need a push?"

"Yes, please," comes the reply.

"Where are you?" the husband calls out.

"Over here," the drunk replies. "On the swing."

TRACY DAVIDSON

THE FIRST DATING PROFILE ...

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Eve

SEX: Female

AGE: About 15 minutes since I was invented, but I don't look a minute over ten minutes old

LOCATION: Over by some ferns

HEIGHT: A tall vine

WEIGHT: A bunch of sticks

BODY TYPE: Only female type there is

FAVOURITE MUSIC: Birds

FAVOURITE MOVIES: Birds

FAVOURITE FOOD: Birds

HOBBIES: Being tempted, birds

PROFESSION: Woman

PERSONALITY: VERY easily tempted

TURN-ONS: Adam, birds

INCOME LEVEL: A handful of beautiful sticks

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Dreamers

The words of a poor woman in India spurred Anders Wilhelmson to come up with a radical solution to the world's biggest sanitation problem

Against the Current

BY CARI SIMMONS

FOR TEN YEARS Swedish architect, Professor Anders Wilhelmson, had been taking his students on annual trips to study the world's urban areas, including their slums. While in India in May 2005, his group met poor footpath dwellers through a women's advocacy group. "One of them said to me: 'We don't need architects'." The one thing the women couldn't solve themselves was personal hygiene and not having decent toilets.

"This was a life changing moment," says Anders. "Here was a woman telling me what had to be done on a global level."

Today, that idea he got on an Indian street helps people like Rose and her four children in distant Kenya. They used to line up early every morning to use a public pay toilet in Nairobi's Kiberia slum. Rose could not let her kids use the plot based latrine near their home since it was often filled to the brim with excreta. She worried about the small children falling into the big holed pit latrine. But mostly she worried about their health.

Since she started using Peepoo hygienic toilets in 2012, however, Rose hasn't had to worry. The single-use, biodegradable plastic bag costing less than three euro cents [about ₹2] contains a teabag-size pouch of urea that kicks into action when it comes into contact with feces or urine. This removes any disease-producing pathogens before the bag is collected and eventually used as fertilizer.

Around the world, according to UN

PIERRE EKMAN

Anders Wilhelmson at Peepoo's Stockholm headquarters.

agencies, there are an estimated 2.6 billion people who lack even a simple latrine. Every 15 seconds a child dies from disease attributable to unsafe drinking water, deplorable sanitation and poor hygiene. Providing the most basic of toilets is helping to prevent life-threatening bacterial infections such as typhoid and cholera. The Kenyan slum where Rose lives is just one of many places around the world where people have started using the Peepoos.

In 2006, the brain behind the Peepoo, Professor Anders Wilhelmson founded the Peepoople Company, based in Stockholm and Nairobi, Kenya, to produce this practical, affordable toilet solution. "When I hear that two million people, children, die every year due to a lack of sanitation, I get angry," says 59-year-old Anders.

And being angry propels this man into action. He also likes to go against the current, or take an opposing view. "Tvärtemot," he calls it in Swedish.

Growing up in Karlskoga in the shadow of the Bofors arms factory, studious Anders was ferociously bullied by the tough immigrant kids from Finland in the largely working-class town. He had to learn to fight back at a young age.

Summer holidays came as a welcome relief. They also brought him into contact with an older neighbour, a professor and writer who preached radical views opposite to those of Anders' more conservative father. "He introduced me to intellectual discourse—you couldn't find that in Karlskoga in the 1960s and 1970s," says Anders. Tvärtemot.

He got the idea at night. All next day, Anders says, he "proceeded to talk about s."***

From age six he wanted to be an architect; Anders' father wanted him to be a doctor. Nonetheless he let his son, at the ripe old age of 16, design the home where they would later live.

Wilhelmson became an internationally known architect and designer, including being part of Saab automobile's industrial design team. In the 1980s he led the yuppie life, but he was afraid that he was losing his integrity. He also didn't like being told what to do. In 1996 he began teaching architecture at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Stockholm.

After his 2005 trip to India, Anders became obsessed with his mission to find a solution. His toilet would be contemporary, affordable and available for anyone. It would be personal and mobile, self-sanitizing and for single use to prevent the spread of disease. Finally, the waste would be

converted into something of value.

In September 2005, while celebrating his then partner Camilla Wirseen's fortieth birthday in Paris, he woke her up in the middle of the night to say that he had the solution to the world's sanitation problem. All the next day, he says, he proceeded to "talk about s***."

He even persuaded Camilla, a photographer, to get on board. "Without her talent this may not have happened," he says. "She's more of a social entrepreneur than I am." Today, as Peepoople's project director, Camilla spends much of her time in the field, helping schools and communities get started with Peepoos.

But before the idea could come to fruition, they had to persuade scientific researchers to work on the invention, as well as get the support of sanitation experts. Then they had to build a case for investors to put their money into the Peepoople concept.

It wasn't always easy getting acceptance for the Peepoo idea. "It's provocative," says Camilla, who faced opposition among some water and sanitation experts.

But not everyone scoffed. Annika Nordin and Björn Vinnerås at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences had been studying ammonia-based sanitation and quickly became part of the research team helping develop the Peepoo.

"It's successful today because it isn't based on large requirements on infrastructure," says Nordin.

In 2007 the Peepoo was patented. Since it launched its first Peepoo toilets in Kenya, Peepoople has helped people in eight other countries including Bangladesh, South Africa, Pakistan and Syria, where the toilets have been used for disaster relief and in refugee camps. (It has been tested in India.) The company is currently investing in a new production plant in Sweden with capacity for up to 500,000 Peepoos a day to keep up with demand.

Peepoos are making a difference. "People are changing their behaviour to invest in clean water, sanitation and hygiene," says Rahab Mbochi, Peepoo School Project Manager in the Kiberia slum.

Peepoos are gaining ground among the movers and shakers in sanitation. As Professor Eric O. Odada, a member of the UN Secretary-Generals' Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation, says: "The Peepoo is the ideal product for the biggest problem facing the world."

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Department of Wit

A Wrinkle in Time

BY CASSIE STOCKS

SOMETHING WAS seriously wrong with my face. I tried switching moisturizers. Had the formulation of my foundation been changed? I even sent an SOS to a swishy cosmetics company: "I have pores the size of moon craters. Please advise." They never replied.

Then, one day, as I stood in front of the mirror poking my cheek, it came to me. My skin was aging, wrinkling and crumpling. It wasn't reformulation, an allergic reaction or bad lighting. It was Mother Nature. As I was growing older and wiser, my face was doing its own expected thing without requesting my permission. *Well, huh,* I thought. *What do you know?* Poke. Poke.

I don't know why this seemed like a sneak attack, as if aging had been hiding under my bed and suddenly blanketed me at 45 years of age as I snored (I never snored when I was younger either). I'd already seen major changes in my thighs and my butt; however, they were way down there…somewhere…and generally covered. But above the neck? That got my attention.

I looked in the mirror and saw the faces of my mother, my grandmother and, early one Monday morning, my great-great-great-uncle Bertrum, minus most of the facial hair. I wasn't sure how I felt about my new appearance, though Uncle Bertrum was a fine, if rather grim-looking, person. Then I thought of Wabi-Sabi.

Wabi-Sabi is not, dear reader, a hot green paste served with sushi, nor is it a method of redecorating for prosperity. Wabi-Sabi is a Japanese philosophy that celebrates age and imperfection, usually in inanimate objects like vases, wooden benches or me, before I've had my morning coffee. Wabi-Sabi is the veneration of things that have survived the ages. It is the belief that the natural aging of an object—tarnishing, erosion and general decrepitude—adds to its aesthetic and cultural value. In Wabi-Sabi tradition, cracks in a valued item are repaired with gold to honour, rather than conceal, any damages.

The pickers on television antique shows have respect for the time-worn. They love the character of rusty and dented stuff. "It's crusty, just how I like it," one will say, holding up a battle-scarred railway lamp. "It has a good look," says another, regarding a cupboard with scratched wood and peeling paint. I'm certain if they came across my head in a barn, they'd be charmed by my patina.

There's no use getting the screaming heebie-jeebies or bemoaning my lost elasticity. It's going to happen. I might as well honour it. Which is not to say I'm going to now neglect my skin, take it out back and bury it in the dirt, or try to grow moss on it. I will most probably continue to be tempted by modern cosmeceuticals* like grapefruit extract, caffeine and colloidal oatmeal. Tomorrow morning, I may just slap breakfast directly onto my face. But perhaps I will approach my ministrations with reverence rather than aggression. I'll imagine my wrinkles inlaid with gold instead of erased with Botox.

Bring on the Wabi-Sabi face.

I thought I invented this word but an internet search has revealed it already exists.

ILLUSTRATED BY ANANT KULKARNI

The law of travel physics: It takes me 15 minutes to pack before a trip and over a year to unpack when I get back. **@SWOLLENVOICE**

Young Magnus Carlsen talks about life as a world chess champion

My Moves Speak for Themselves

BY SUSAN DOMINUS FROM *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

AT THE AGE OF 13, Norwegian Magnus Carlsen became the youngest grandmaster a decade ago. Now at age 24, Carlsen is ranked number 1 by the World Chess Federation. It is a position he has held for over three years. We speak to the king of the board about preparing for a game, his memory and if he is the best 'athlete' in his country.

You became the world chess champion in November 2013. How do you go about training for the big match?
The most important thing to study is opening theory, but I also study the latest trends to try to stay ahead, discovering new schemes and doing tactical exercises. I try to get into a chess mood.

You're known for standing up and walking away from the board during games. Are you trying to psych out your opponent?
No. I just feel that if there is not too much to think about, it's better to walk around a little bit, maybe get some drinks, some food to get some energy and also to get the blood flowing a little. To a major extent, my moves speak for themselves.

You mean, your opponent can tell if you're feeling confident?
The moves are intimidating enough, so I don't need any extra tricks to make my opponents fear me.

There has been some controversy about whether you should be considered the best athlete in Norway.
Most people agree that chess is a sport, because in Norwegian the word for "sport" is more about something you compete in. I don't really

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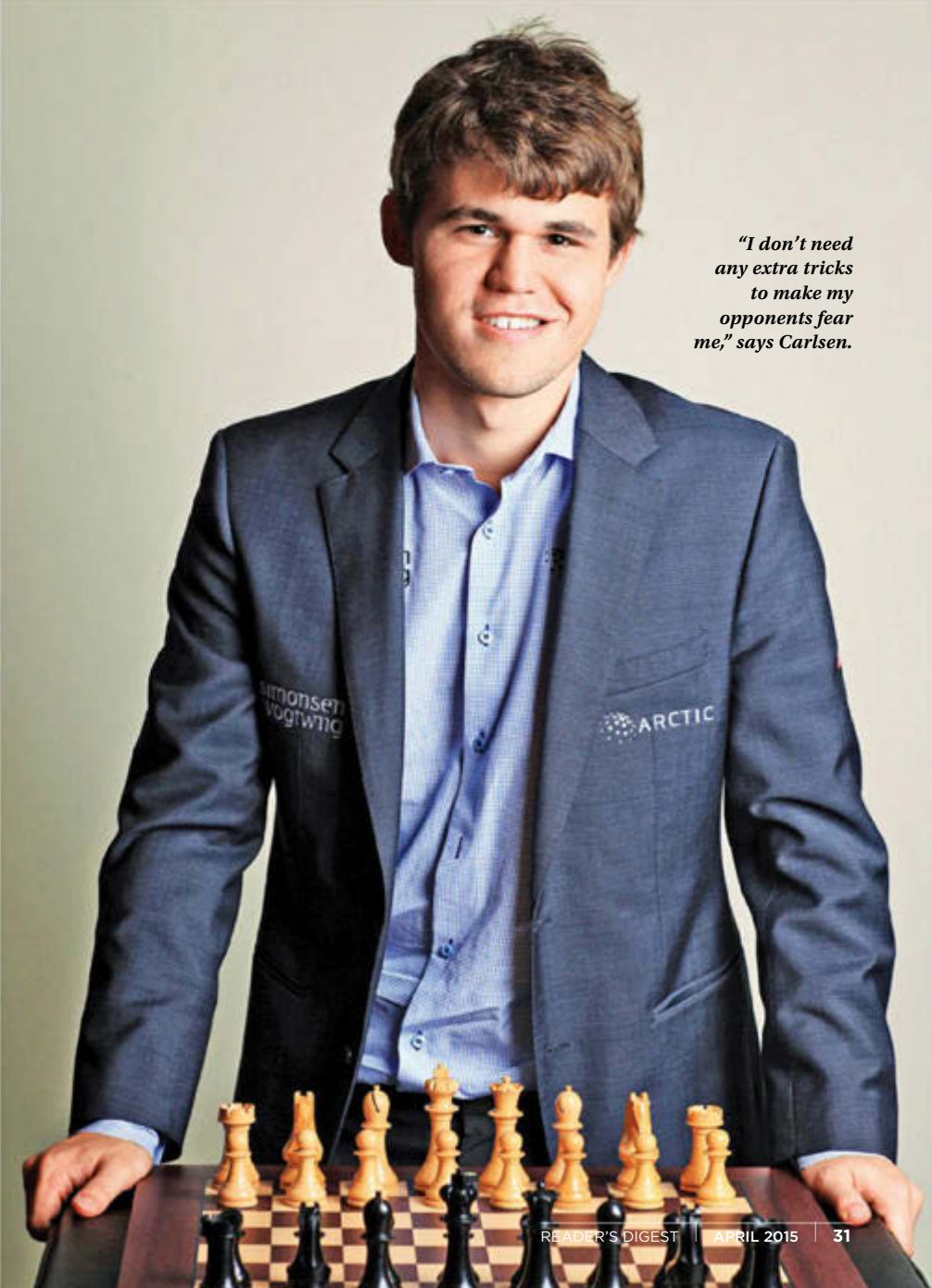

"I don't need any extra tricks to make my opponents fear me," says Carlsen.

think too much about it. I think that chess is chess, and that's good enough for me.

When you're socializing at parties or bars outside the chess world, do you casually drop the chess thing into conversation with women? Or is it a subject you avoid?
Whenever I'm out, whether it's in Norway or somewhere else, I don't want to talk about chess too much. But I think, in general, being very good at something helps. Can we talk about something else?

You've travelled all over the world to compete. Have you seen any unique chess-related rituals in different countries?
Not really, but in 2004, I played a tournament in Dubai, and every day in the middle of the game there was a prayer break. Everyone would stop playing.

You can keep 10 games of chess going at once without even looking, and still win. Has that incredible working memory served you well in other parts of your life?
No, I forget all kinds of stuff. I mean, I'm pretty good at remembering names, but I can never remember faces. I regularly forget where I left my credit cards, my mobile phone, keys and so on.

Does your talent at chess translate to other board games? Are you a killer at Monopoly?
I used to play a lot with my sisters.

Did you crush them?
No, it was hard because they would gang up on me. Even though I was much better at the game—well, that's what I thought anyway—it was very, very difficult to win.

Russian oligarchs sometimes offer to pay you a lot of money to play chess with them. Does that happen in America too?
I'm sponsored by Arctic Securities, so I've had a few events in New York and London, and then lots of people from Wall Street come, and I play simultaneous games with them. It's always fun to be around people who are very good at what they're doing.

Do they try to hire you, these financiers?
No, not yet. I don't know why though.

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You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water.

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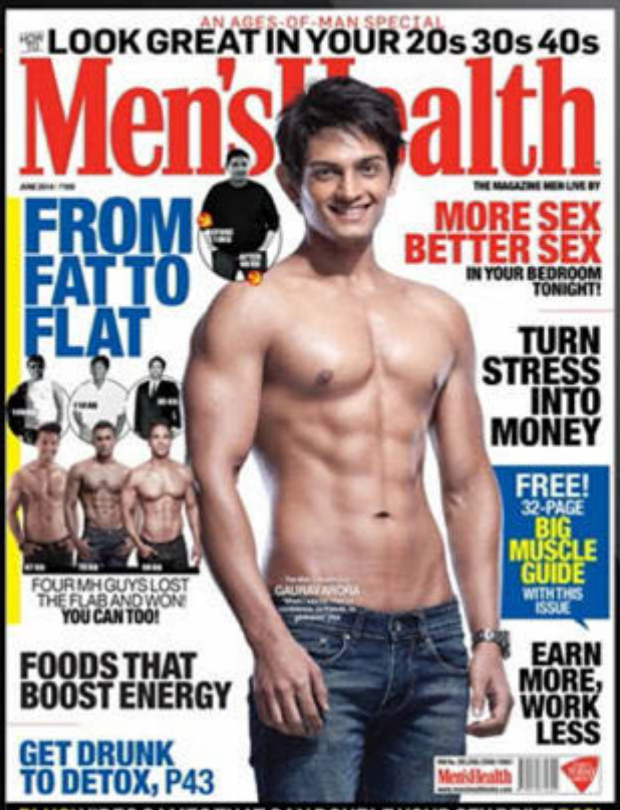

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ALL IN

A Day's Work

"To make this interview more entertaining, I would like you to take a breath of helium before answering the questions."

"HAS YOUR DIET changed?" I asked an 87-year-old woman I was admitting into the hospital.

"Yes," she said. "For Lent, I gave up whipped cream on my jelly, chocolates, and my two beers a night. [Pause] And look where it's got me."

L.K., from *the internet*

WHILE FINALIZING an elderly woman's knee replacement surgery, her son sounded quite well-versed with the procedure and used medical jargon comfortably. I was beginning to hold him in awe until he asked, "Doctor, can you please remove her prostate too? She often wets the bed at night."

NILEN SHAH, MD, *Mumbai*

I FEEL LIKE I WOULD enjoy getting out of bed more if I had to do it only three times a week. This every-day thing is overkill. **@POPCORNGODDESS1**

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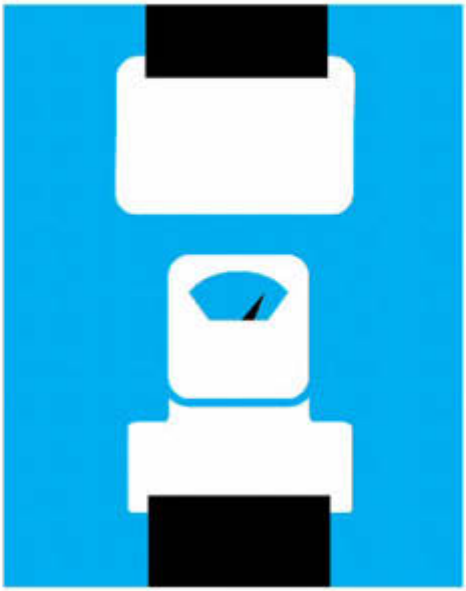


Who's to blame when an obese passenger dies after she tries to fly?

The Case of the Unfriendly Skies

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2012, Janos and Vilma Soltesz flew from New York to Budapest, Hungary, where they stayed at their vacation home. It wasn't easy for Vilma to travel—she weighed 181 kilos, and her left leg was amputated above the knee. She'd bought two seats for herself and informed Lufthansa airlines of her condition, since she required a special lift to get into the cabin.

When the couple, both in their mid-50s, boarded their return flight home to New York via KLM airlines on 15th October, they found the backs of two seats in Vilma's row broken. She was not offered other seats. Instead, the captain emerged and told the Solteszes to get off the plane.

The couple waited in the airport for five hours. Vilma had been feeling ill since 2nd October, and her physician in New York wanted to examine her. Finally, the airline informed them that they'd be flying out on Delta, KLM's partner, the following day from Prague, in the Czech Republic, a four-hour drive away. KLM assured Janos that Delta would assist Vilma to board the plane there.

But the next day, at Prague airport, they realized that Delta didn't have an adequate wheelchair or lift to aid Vilma. The couple got back to their vacation home. Next, their travel agent booked three seats on a Lufthansa flight from Prague to New York on 22nd October. When Vilma was

ILLUSTRATION BY NOMA BAR

nearly seated on the plane, the captain asked the couple to disembark, claiming that Vilma was delaying other passengers. They got off the plane and the Solteszes returned again to their vacation home. Two days later, Vilma died in her bed.

In January 2013, Janos sued the three airlines for $6 million, claiming "wrongful death." Lufthansa's lawyer, Michael Holland, sent a letter to the New York district court judge in February, asking to dismiss the case since it didn't qualify as an accident under the 1999 Montreal Convention, an international treaty that governs airline liability. According to the treaty, a passenger can recover damages only if the injuries were caused by "an unexpected or unusual event ... external to the passenger." Holland claimed that the accident wasn't "external," because Vilma's "own health condition rendered her unable to travel safely."

Were the airlines liable for the death of Vilma Soltesz? You be the judge.

THE VERDICT

In a letter to the judge, Janos's lawyer, Holly Ostrov Ronai, argued that despite advance notice of Vilma's condition, the airlines caused her "to repeatedly board, disembark, travel from airline to airline, travel to another airport, and even travel to another country, which caused her medical condition to worsen." The judge agreed, but the case never made it to court. In August 2013, the airlines settled for an undisclosed amount. "It's quite sad," says Ronai. "They wanted to get home. They just wanted to get home."

India's Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) instructed all carriers in February 2014: "No airline shall refuse to carry persons with disability or reduced mobility ... provided such persons or their representatives, at the time of booking, inform the airline of their requirement(s)." And the 1995 Persons with Disabilities Act, says: "Establishments in the transport sector shall ... for the benefit of persons with disabilities, take special measures to adapt ... aircrafts in such a way as to permit easy access to such persons." Despite these safeguards, airlines have regularly discriminated against handicapped individuals, especially blind persons and those in wheelchairs. Don't let any airline treat you or anybody badly. The law is on your side and you could complain to the DGCA and to a consumer forum.

Have you had a similar problem with an airline? Will all this information help you? Write to the Editorial address, or e-mail: editor.india@rd.com

Points to Ponder

I ENJOY and am enjoying the good things that come along with [aging] ... Nobody can buy experience. Nobody can buy wisdom. Nobody can buy a shared history with others that you get by being relevant and engaged year upon year upon year.

ROB LOWE, *actor,* on *esquire.com*

THE PRICE OF GREATNESS is more than you want to pay. The world's most legendary athletes are usually the ones most wildly out of balance. Michael Jordan had to crush you, whether you were an opponent or a teammate ... Enjoy your heroes, but don't envy them.

RICK REILLY, *sportswriter,* on *espn.com*

I DON'T UNDERSTAND the hullabaloo about inner beauty. What actually brings out your beauty is the radiance of being content and you can only be content when you are employed in something you love.

ZOHRA SEHGAL, *actress*

PERHAPS EVEN MORE often than exchanging pleasantries, we also exchange dissatisfactions ... Two strangers complaining on a subway platform can end up cracking a smile or laughing, and though it would hardly be considered the beginning of a lifelong friendship, it is still neighbourly.

MARIANA ALESSANDRI, PHD, *professor of philosophy,* in *The New York Times*

I wish America would spend even half as much time complaining about plastics in our oceans as we do about actresses' plastic surgery.

BETTE MIDLER, *actress and philanthropist,* on Twitter

EUGENE GOLOGURSKY/GETTY IMAGES

The use of torture compromises that which most distinguishes us from our enemies: our belief that all people, even ... enemies, possess basic human rights.

JOHN MCCAIN, ***US senator***

THE THINGS WE DO outlast our mortality ... They're like the pyramids that the Egyptians built to honour the pharaohs. Only instead of being made of stone, they're made out of the memories people have of you.

R.J. PALACIO, ***author,*** in her young-adult novel *Wonder*

IN MOST SOCIETIES, we [recognize] the right of people to keep secrets. But really, there's only one purpose for keeping secrets: Secrets exist to prevent other people from acting as they would if they had complete information.

NOAH DYER, ***transparency advocate,*** in *The Atlantic*

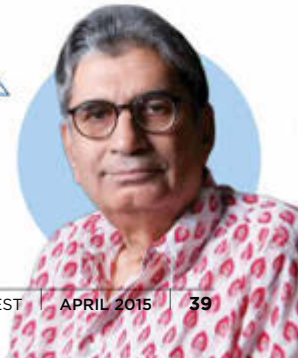
WE ALWAYS LOOK at our children's futures with equal parts unjustified hope and unjustified alarm—both utopia and dystopia. We look at our own past with wistful nostalgia.

ALISON GOPNIK, PHD, ***professor of psychology,*** in *The Wall Street Journal*

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN job destruction because of automation and technological progress. The important thing to keep in mind is that there has also always been job creation because of the same forces.

ANDREW MCAFEE, PHD, ***research scientist,*** in *New Scientist*

When I see editors wobble, go from one extreme to another, that is the first sign of professional weakness. I am not suggesting that people can't change their minds. But there is a *Laxman rekha*. My *Laxman rekha* is pretty simple: secularism. **VINOD MEHTA,** ***editor,*** on *Scroll.in*



FROM TOP: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES. COURTESY OUTLOOK MAGAZINE

There's a surprisingly playful way in which it can be treated

Do You Suffer Panic Attacks?

BY DR DAYAL MIRCHANDANI

DR DAYAL MIRCHANDANI, ***MD, is a Mumbai-based consulting psychiatrist and author.***

ON HER WAY HOME FROM A PARTY, 28-year-old Smita* suddenly found it difficult to breathe. Her heart was pounding and she felt she would die that very moment. Her friend immediately drove to the nearest hospital. The emergency room doctor administered a tranquillizer and insisted that she stay overnight in the hospital to rule out a heart attack.

Smita lay awake all night listening to the beep of the cardiac monitor attached to her. In the morning all her tests were clear. Yet, overnight her world turned upside down and her sense of safety was fractured—the doctor had also told her that she'd suffered a panic, or anxiety, attack.

Over the next couple of months, Smita had three similar episodes quite unexpectedly. Her GP diagnosed them as anxiety attacks. Yet she resolutely refused to see a psychiatrist or take any anti-panic medication. Instead she embarked on a blitz of alternative therapies: Reiki, Pranic healing, yoga and meditation. The yoga and meditation helped reduce the intensity of her attacks, but Smita continued to be preoccupied with irrational fears of a serious undetected illness. She had also become vigilant, constantly monitoring her body for anything out of the ordinary: any twinge or strange sensation

Name changed to protect privacy.

(DR DAYAL) S. SHETTY. (PANIC) ILLUSTRATION BY MAYUR SONI

would trigger catastrophic thoughts, leading to more panic. Soon she quit her job and became a recluse, restricting her outings to a minimum.

In a year's time, her boyfriend gave her an ultimatum: "See a psychiatrist or break up with me."

On hearing her story, the psychiatrist told her that an energy drink she'd had at the party probably triggered the initial attack. Smita's initial panic attack frightened her so much that her problem now stemmed from a fear of another attack. The doctor told her that panic attacks could be triggered by physical illnesses, hormonal imbalances, stress and psychological disorders. An experience of intense anxiety scares the person to the point that panic takes on a life of its own.

The psychiatrist gave Smita two options—medication or a new approach, developed by Reid Wilson, PhD, author of the book *Don't Panic: Taking Control of Anxiety Attacks,* which promised rapid results. He told her that as she'd already tried relaxation with little improvement, behavioural techniques would take a long time to help. Medication focuses on reducing symptoms and discomfort.

In Dr Wilson's approach, it's the opposite. Here one seeks to increase the discomfort in order to allow the mind to 'habituate.' The more frequently you allow yourself to experience anxiety, the sooner you get used to it. He explains this with the example of wearing new shoes. When you first wear them, you are very aware of them but soon you are quite comfortable with them.

TO PROVOKE AN ANXIETY ATTACK Smita's psychiatrist asked her to breathe rapidly. Within a few breaths some distressing symptoms including tightness and tingling in the chest started and these sensations triggered upsetting thoughts. At this point he asked her to personify the panic disorder (PD) and talk to the PD as though it were another person and to continually ask it to "bring on more anxiety." It scared her at first, but after doing this a few times she found she was no longer as frightened by the sensations she experienced.

As homework, using her imagina-

tion and her breathing, Smita was given the task of trying her best to bring on the anxiety as many times as possible every day. The aim was to learn how to mentally change her attitude to the distress from "dangerous" to "this is a game," and seek out every opportunity to do this. In addition he asked her to download the free *Playing with Anxiety* storybook, which explains this approach.

By her next session Smita was already much calmer and feeling more in control and willing to experiment further. Over the next few sessions both she and the psychiatrist worked out a number of increasingly difficult weekly tasks and each week she found her distress tolerance increasing. In time, she even agreed to travel in a crowded commuter train during rush hour—something that a month earlier would have been impossible.

WHILE SMITA MADE rapid progress, possibly due to her high motivation fuelled by the fear of losing her boyfriend, I have found that the most difficult part of this approach is persuading sufferers to face their fears. Rather than the severity and duration of the problem, a willingness to "play" with this anxiety determines the success of this approach. I have even seen patients who have succeeded in using the approach after reading *Don't Panic.*

Slightly modified versions of this approach have also been found to be useful in helping people get over other anxiety disorders, including obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Those too scared to use this approach can still be helped with medication or traditional behavioural methods such as cognitive therapy, hypnotherapy and relaxation hypnotherapy but they take much longer to get over the problem.

The e-book version of *Playing with Anxiety* can be downloaded free from *playingwithanxiety.com*

REMARKABLE TIMING

- Mark Twain was born during an appearance of Halley's Comet in 1835 and died on the day of its next appearance in 1910.
- Abraham Lincoln created the Secret Service on 14 April 1865—the very same day he was shot at Ford's Theatre.
- John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on 4 July 1826—exactly 50 years after signing the US Declaration of Independence.

Source: *dailycognition.com*

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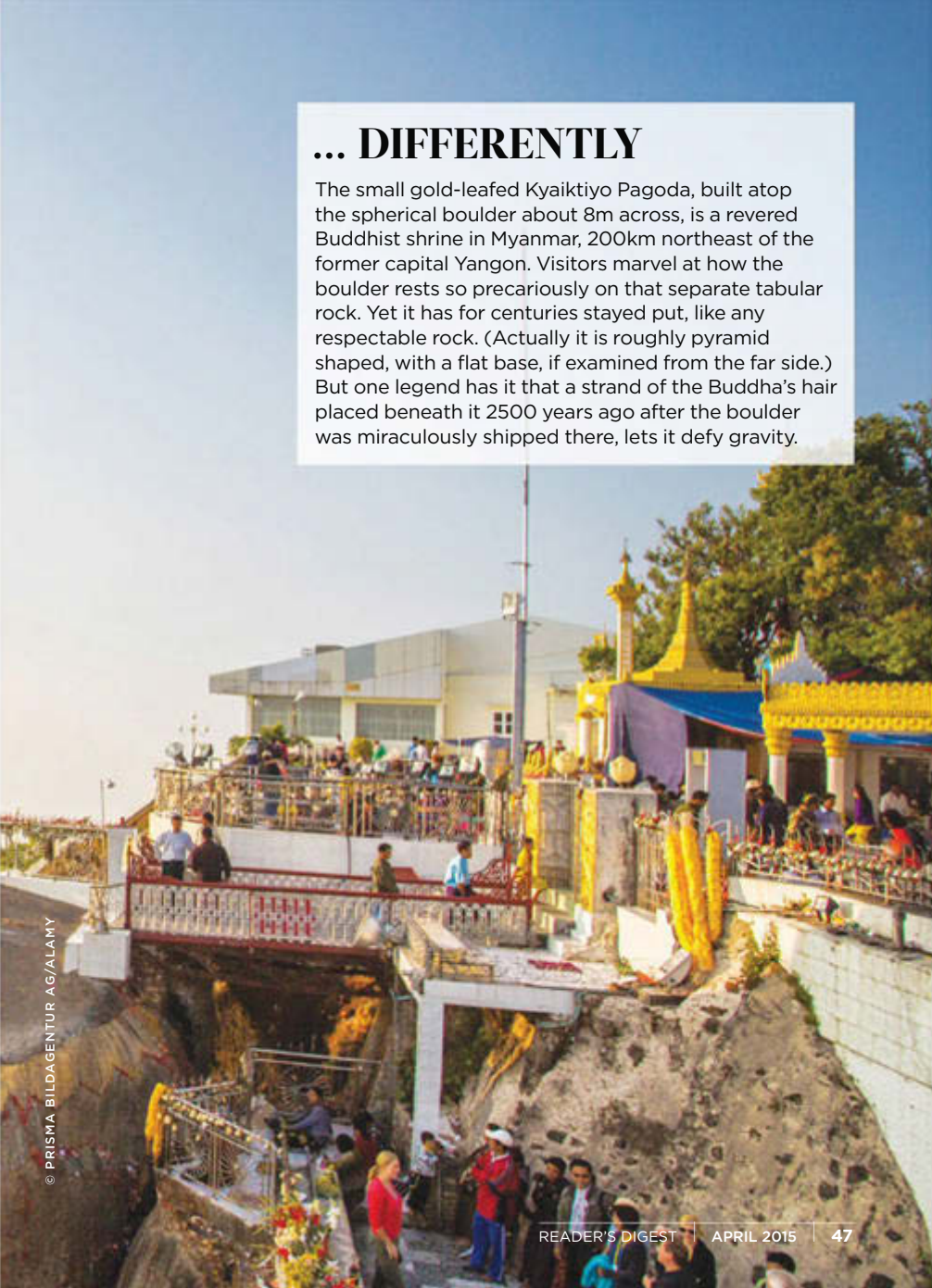

... DIFFERENTLY

The small gold-leafed Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, built atop the spherical boulder about 8m across, is a revered Buddhist shrine in Myanmar, 200km northeast of the former capital Yangon. Visitors marvel at how the boulder rests so precariously on that separate tabular rock. Yet it has for centuries stayed put, like any respectable rock. (Actually it is roughly pyramid shaped, with a flat base, if examined from the far side.) But one legend has it that a strand of the Buddha's hair placed beneath it 2500 years ago after the boulder was miraculously shipped there, lets it defy gravity.

© PRISMA BILDAGENTUR AG/ALAMY

Life's Like That

VIJAY N. SETH (VINS)

WHEN I BOUGHT BEER at the grocery store, the clerk asked for my birthdate.

I said, "10-3-60."

Her next question: "Is that '19' 60?"

DAVID PHENIX

ONCE, A STAY-IN guest of ours was leaving when he couldn't find a shoe. We searched all over without luck, so he departed leaving his odd shoe behind. "The other one will be somewhere here," I'd assured him. "I'll keep the pair for you." Over the next couple of years, I sometimes saw the odd shoe lying about. Then, one day while clearing up, I threw it away with the garbage.

A few days later, looking just as lonesome, the other shoe surfaced.

MOHAN S., *Mumbai*

I WAS STANDING in front of the bathroom mirror one evening admiring my reflection, when I posed this question to my wife of 30 years: "Will you still love me when I'm old, fat, and balding?"

She answered, "I do."

MICHAEL JORDAN

In my lifetime, I'd like to ...

Our RD India Facebook friends shared some deep desires and wild fantasies in their responses to our post. Here are six of them.

Srinagar

... see a peaceful, happy **Kashmir.**
UMAR FAYAAZ

Jagraon, Punjab

... see aliens land on my roof and reveal their secrets.
JIMMIE BANSAL

Guwahati

... prove all those who underestimated me wrong.
KAHAAN MEHTA

... start all over again with a little more courage, a little less fear.
MEHAK A. SHARMA

Mumbai

... write for the Reader's Digest.
FAHMEEDA TABASSUM

Vellore

Chennai

... see my husband keep his clothes properly in the laundry basket.
BANUPRIYA MOHANKUMAR

☛ *To participate in our next "Finish This Sentence" feature, visit Reader's Digest India on Facebook.*

Life is improving for most people on this planet: Two leading philanthropists deliver good news about global poverty

3 Myths About the World's Poor

BY BILL AND MELINDA GATES
FROM THE *GATES FOUNDATION 2014 ANNUAL LETTER*

BY ALMOST ANY MEASURE, the world is better off now than it has ever been. Extreme poverty has been cut in half over the past 25 years, child mortality rates are plunging around the globe, and many of the countries that have long relied on foreign aid are now self-sufficient.

So why do so many people seem to think things are getting worse? Much of the reason is because they're in the grip of three deeply damaging myths about global poverty and development. But the belief that the world is getting worse isn't just mistaken—it's also detrimental. It stalls progress and blinds us to the opportunity we have to create a world where almost everyone has a chance to prosper.

MYTH 1: Poor Countries Are Doomed to Stay Poor

Incomes and other measures of welfare are rising almost everywhere. Take Mexico City. In 1987, when we first visited, most homes lacked running water, and we saw people trekking to fill up water jugs; it reminded us of rural Africa. The guy who ran Microsoft's Mexico City office would send his kids back to the United States for checkups to make sure the smog wasn't making them sick.

Today, the city is mind-blowingly different, boasting high-rise buildings, cleaner air, and new roads and bridges. You still find pockets of poverty, but when we visit, we think, *Wow, most people here are*

Melinda Gates meets women and children in Dedaur in central India, January 2013.

PRASHANT PANJIAR/COURTESY © BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

middle-class—what a miracle. You can see a similar transformation in Nairobi, New Delhi, Shanghai, and many other cities. In our lifetime, the global picture of poverty has been completely redrawn. Since 1960, China's income per person has gone up eightfold. India's has quadrupled, Brazil's has almost quintupled, and tiny Botswana, thanks to shrewd management of its mineral resources, has seen a 30-fold increase. A new class of middle-income nations that barely existed 50 years ago now includes more than half of the world's population.

This holds true even in Africa. Since 1998, income per person has climbed by two thirds—from just over $1300 then to nearly $2200 today. Seven of the ten fastest-growing economies from the past half decade are in Africa.

We are optimistic enough that we're willing to make a prediction: By 2035, there will be almost no poor countries left in the world. Yes, a few countries will be held back by war, political realities (such as North Korea), or geography (such as landlocked states in central Africa). And inequality will still be a problem. But every country in South America, Asia, and Central America (except perhaps Haiti)—and most in coastal Africa—will be middle-income nations. More than 70 percent of countries will have a higher per-person income than China does today.

MYTH 2: Foreign Aid Is a Waste

We worry about this myth. It gives leaders an excuse to cut back on

aid—and that would mean fewer lives saved and more time before countries can become self-sufficient. Foreign aid is a phenomenal investment. It doesn't just save lives; it also lays the groundwork for lasting, long-term progress.

Many people think that foreign aid is a large part of rich countries' budgets. When pollsters ask Americans what share goes to aid, the most common response is "25 percent." In fact, it is less than 1 percent, or about $30 billion a year. The US government spends more than twice as much on farm subsidies as on international health aid; it spends more than 60 times as much on the military.

One common complaint is that aid gets wasted on corruption, and some of it does. But the horror stories you hear—where aid helped a dictator build palaces—come mostly from a time when aid was designed to win Cold War allies rather than improve people's lives. The problem today is much smaller. We should try to reduce small-scale corruption, but we can't eliminate it, any more than we can eliminate waste from every business or government program. Many people call to end aid programs if one dollar of corruption is found. However, four of the past seven governors of [the US state of] Illinois went to prison for corruption, and no one is demanding that the state's schools or highways be closed.

Critics also complain that aid keeps countries dependent on outsiders' generosity. But this argument focuses on the most difficult cases still struggling for self-sufficiency. Here is a list of former recipients that have grown so much that they receive little aid today: Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Thailand, Mauritius, Botswana, Morocco, Singapore, and Malaysia.

Critics are right to say there is no definitive proof that aid drives economic growth. But we know that it drives improvements in health, agriculture, and infrastructure, which correlate strongly with long-run growth. Look at what aid has accomplished: A baby born in 1960 had an 18 percent chance of dying before her fifth birthday. For a child born today, it is less than 5 percent; in 2035, it will be 1.6 percent. We can't think of any other 75-year improvement in welfare that even comes close.

MYTH 3: Saving Lives Leads to Overpopulation

For more than two centuries, people have worried about doomsday scenarios in which food supply can't keep up with population growth. But this anxiety has a dangerous tendency to override concern for the humans who make up that population. Letting children die now so they don't starve later isn't just heartless—it doesn't work. And countries

with the highest death rates are among the fastest-growing populations in the world: Women there tend to have the most births.

When more children survive, parents decide to have smaller families. Consider Thailand. Around 1960, child mortality rates started going down. In the 1970s, after the government invested in a family-planning program, birthrates started to drop. Over two decades, Thai women went from having six children on average to two. Today, child mortality rates there are almost as low as they are in America, and Thai women have an average of 1.6 children.

This pattern of falling death rates followed by falling birthrates applies for most of the world. Saving lives doesn't lead to overpopulation—just the opposite. Creating societies where people enjoy health, prosperity, fundamental equality, and access to contraceptives is the only way to a sustainable world.

More people, especially political leaders, need to know about the misconceptions behind these myths. Contributions to promote international health and development offer an astonishing return. We all have the chance to create a world where extreme poverty is the exception rather than the rule and where all children have the chance to thrive. For those of us who believe in the value of every human life, there isn't any more inspiring work under way today.

Did you also believe in any of these myths? In you opinion, has poverty decreased in India, or are things getting worse? Write to editor.india@rd.com

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PLEASE SIGN HERE...

Some government petitions in the UK—involving everything from healthcare training to animal welfare—receive hundreds of thousands of votes. The following ones failed to rouse as much interest.

Petition: Hoodies should be banned (89 votes)

Petition: Abolition of money (60 votes)

Petition: Ban all fireworks that have bangs (46 votes)

Petition: Introduce a 99 pence coin (15 votes)

Petition: Stop emigration please (11 votes)

Source: *ukrankandfile.wordpress.com*

See a parent behaving badly? Here's when and how to step in

Peer Pressure

BY BRANDIE WEIKLE

SOPHIE CARUSO'S* young cousin got spankings. Sure, they were the kind she and the child's father, who were raised like siblings, received when they were growing up—swats on the rear that didn't leave marks. At family gatherings where Caruso would see her cousin and his wife, she'd often witness seven-year-old Devon* getting smacked in situations that struck the Toronto, Canada, mother of two as typical kid squabbles. "I'd cringe. But I felt like it wasn't my business and that saying something could damage our relationship forever," she says.

One day, the two moms were discussing parenthood in general, and the conversation turned to the effectiveness of different discipline strategies. Sensing she had an opening, Caruso said, "I've never spanked my kids, but yours aren't any better behaved than mine."

"There was this silence for a minute, and then I felt a shift," she says. "I think there was almost a eureka moment that corporal punishment does not make for a better-behaved child." Caruso hasn't seen Devon get a spanking since.

Judy Arnall, a certified parenting educator and author of the forthcoming book *Parenting With Patience*, says it's best to proceed with caution when it comes to assessing others' styles. "Parenting is dear to people's hearts, and it's a real minefield," she says.

Because there are so many different approaches, it's inevitable that we'll witness tactics employed by close friends, family and strangers that we wouldn't use ourselves. Most of the time, we should leave the situation alone, but much depends on how well you know the person and how easily they might get offended, says Arnall. Let's say a close friend can't seem to get her children to listen, and they often behave rudely to her in front of others. "I would feel them out by saying something like, 'Does that bother you when your children act that way?' If they seem open to it, you could offer some solutions," she says.

Realize that there's only so much you can accomplish in situations with strangers.

Strangers we see interacting with their kids at the supermarket checkout should be treated differently, though. If you're going to get involved, the only way to do so is to offer acknowledgement and help, says Andrea Nair, a psychotherapist and parenting educator.

While she advocates staying out of it most of the time, Nair recalls

Names changed upon request.

ILLUSTRATED BY SUDHIR SHETTY

witnessing a mother yelling at and belittling her child in the parking lot of a store. She approached the woman and said, "Whoa, I know how you feel. Been there. May I help you put your groceries in the car so you can pick up your child?" The mom in the parking lot accepted her help with a heavy sigh, Nair says. "The first step is validation. Without it, it'll feel like they're being judged," she says. "Receiving help putting the bags in the car just allowed her to see she was scaring her child and needed to regroup."

Still, it's important to realize that there's only so much you can accomplish in situations with strangers, says Nair. When a parent is being so hard on a child that someone would feel compelled to intervene, chances are good they're too stressed and angry to receive your unsolicited advice gracefully. "The defensive part of the brain will click in, and it will feel like an attack," she says. Don't expect a response along the lines of, "You're right, I've been going about this parenting thing all wrong." It's more likely you'll be told off. "But what you can hope to do is show that child that you see what is happening—and plant a seed for using positive discipline within that parent."

It's also okay to establish boundaries around how things are handled under your own roof. "If it's your home, it's your rules," says Arnall. If a young guest is whining for ice cream before a meal, you're perfectly within your rights to say, "In our house, we don't eat ice cream before dinner," regardless of whether or not his own parents would acquiesce, she says.

And the same is true in reverse. If you're uncomfortable with the late bedtimes and junk-food consumption that occur when your child stays over at a friend's, you can either concede that things happen their way at their place or decline the invitation. "If you aren't comfortable, have the sleepover at your house. Then you can enforce the rules," Arnall says.

If you're in neutral territory, such as at a holiday home you've rented with three other families, you're only in charge of your children's behaviour—steer clear of disciplining the other kids, Arnall cautions. Unless your friend's child is engaging in dangerous behaviour or, say, snooping in your suitcase, which is your private property, you should leave the parenting up to them. R

"I saw this sign posted once; it said: 'Blasting Zone Ahead.' Wow ... shouldn't that read: 'Road Closed'?" **BRIAN REGAN**

Update your tourism myths

Don't Believe These Tips

WE ALL LOVE an insider tip, but some of the classic tips for travellers no longer hold true. Check the updates on these tall tales to save cash and add experience to your trip.

■ *Book a plane ticket far in advance to save money.* This myth may have been true years ago, when flights were less common. Back then, the demand for a flight would naturally increase as the date approached, there being few other options. Now, a plethora of alternatives for the most popular routes means that demand is levelled out. According to recent studies, the best time to buy a domestic ticket is between six and seven weeks before the trip.

■ *The best hotel prices are on travel websites.* Don't overlook the benefits of going straight to the hotel to negotiate a good deal. Many chains offer rate guarantees and encourage you to book directly. Hotels also frequently have discounts or offers that third-party websites aren't privy to. Hotels give upgrades, not the agents.

■ *Avoid street food.* When in Rome, do as the Romans do. If this means eating at a street stall, then follow the crowd. Hot, freshly made food is generally safe. Don't sit down at a restaurant and spend more, on the simple assumption that it's the safe option. Can you see the kitchen?

■ *Put your cash in a money pouch.* This is the fastest way to stand out from locals—who will have their money in a wallet or purse. Only take what you need when you leave your hotel room and make sure to put your wallet in a front pocket.

■ *Duty free is cheaper.* This is only true if you're buying products that are heavily taxed, such as cigarettes and alcohol. Sunglasses and perfumes usually have a much higher price than outside the airport.

© IMAGEZOO/ALAMY

It's said to be the most nutrient-dense plant on earth

Marvellous Moringa

BY SHEILA SIVANAND

THERE IS AN ART to eating drumsticks, pulling them with our teeth to strip away the tender flesh. And it is acceptable, though not very elegant, to chew on the rind to juice it of every last bit of flavour. A staple in our diet, moringa gets its common name, drumsticks, from the look of its seed-pods. It's called *senjana* in Hindi, *shobhanjana* in Sanskrit, *murungai* in Tamil and, sometimes, the horseradish tree because the British in India used its pungent, grated root as a substitute for horseradish sauce.

Most coastal Indian homes have drumstick trees in the garden and the leaves and flowers are a delicacy as well. The tiny leaves had to be cooked without their thin tough stalks, so large bunches were ingeniously folded into sheets of paper and then shaken after some hours so that the leaves would fall away naturally, saving hours of time-consuming labour.

The common drumstick tree (*Moringa oleifera*) is suddenly being hailed as a miracle plant, Nature's own multivitamin. The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) calls moringa "the most nutrient-dense botanical on earth." Gram for gram, the leaves are said to have four times the calcium in milk, thrice the potassium in bananas and much more vitamin A and C than carrots or oranges.

Moringa thrives in some of the world's poorest areas and could be a one-stop answer to malnutrition if the leaves are simply dried, powdered and added to food and drink. The tree does well in tropical and subtropical conditions and is highly pest resistant. Its Nigerian name translates to "tree that grows crazily," while in East Africa it is "Mother's best friend."

"People don't realize that something so valuable grows right under their noses," says Madhu Reddy, who grows indigenous food plants on her ancestral organic farm, Aiyor Bai, near Hyderabad. This monsoon, Reddy will be cultivating two high-yielding, early-fruiting hybrid moringa varieties, PKM1 and PKM2.

She has already grown the conventional, non-hybrid varieties from seeds. The hybrids flower twice a year and the pods are longer, fleshier and tastier. "I have a regular old moringa with bitter tasting pods, so I'm experimenting with these new varieties to see how they do," she says. Madhu also adds that moringa is locally used as a companion plant to mango, mostly because it tends to be a shield. Moringa as a "trap plant" attracts agricultural pests away from the mango plantations, saving the mango crop without the use of pesticides. Moringa doesn't mind being cropped, so its leaves may be used as mulch for mango trees.

Walking around the bustling weekly Farmers' Market, initiated in Mumbai by eco-nutritionist Kavita Mukhi, I asked about moringa's sudden emergence as the star of superfoods. "The flowers were a treat in Sindhi cooking," she remembers, "we have it occasionally, which is all right, because if we ate up the flowers, how would we get any fruit? Every year there is a new fad, an expensive new superfood—acai berries, quinoa, etc—when we have cheaper local alternatives. At least

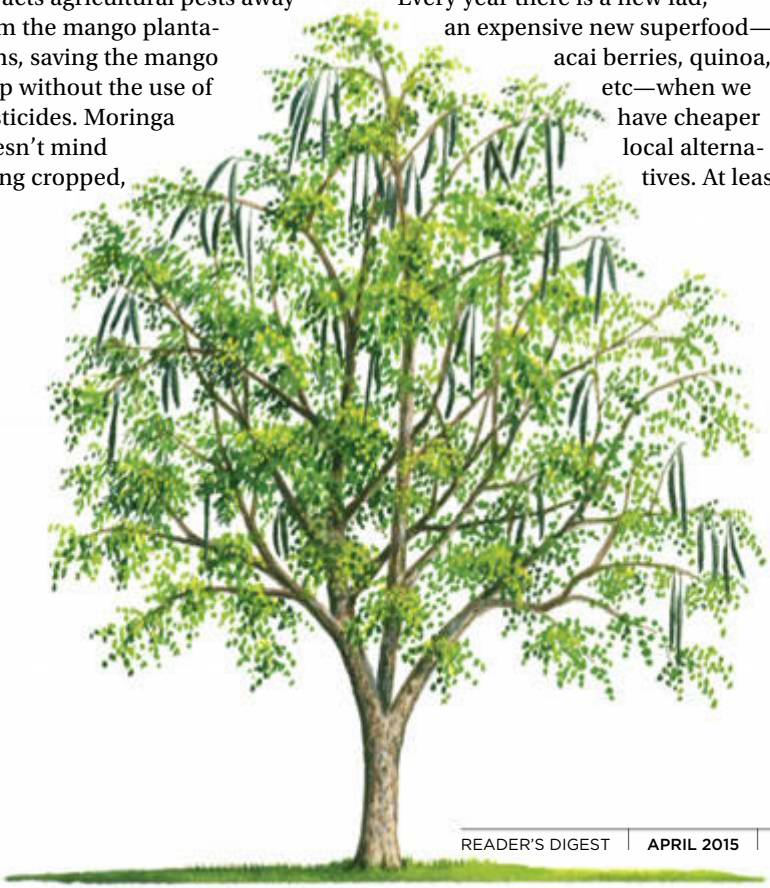

ILLUSTRATION: DORLING KINDERSLEY/GETTY IMAGES

moringa is native."

Madhu Reddy, who has experimented with taking moringa leaves to an organic bazaar, explains why the leaves don't make it to markets. "It doesn't travel well. Moringa leaves are delicate and tend to drop off the branches, making long-term transport and storage messy.

"Not all the flowers turn into fruit and a good proportion falls to the ground. So gathering some flowers to cook doesn't hurt the crop at all, when you think how much gets wasted," Reddy adds. Picking and dehydrating the leaves after the drumsticks are harvested makes sense, because those leaves will fall anyway and grow back later. Per gram, dehydrated leaves have a higher nutritional value than fresh leaves."

> ***From diabetes and arthritis, to detox and mental clarity, the moringa is touted as a veritable tree of life.***

EVERY PART OF the moringa tree has been used in traditional medicine. It is said that native healers around the world treat over 300 diseases with medicines derived from it. Vadodara artist Jitendra Baoni remembers his granny in Madhya Pradesh making soup out of moringa pods "to strengthen the bones," the logic being that the pods are akin to bones with marrow inside. Oddly, moringa reportedly helps with osteoporosis and other bone-related ailments. In the Philippines it is called malunggay and the cooked leaves are routinely given to breastfeeding mothers.

The Hippocratic adage "Let food be your medicine..." seems to especially apply to the moringa, if all the stories about its healing qualities are true. From diabetes and arthritis, to detox and mental clarity, the moringa is being touted as a veritable tree of life.

Native to India, *Moringa oleifera* has a 4000-year history here, and is therefore well known to ayurveda. One of the Sanskrit names for it, *shigru* means an arrow, which describes its strong and penetrative nature. There is another long list of ayurvedic remedies, from taking a leaf decoction for sleeplessness to applying the crushed leaves on the temples for a headache. Nobody can vouch for all of it, since these would fall under the realm of folk medicine, but several of the claims have been researched with exciting results.

In vitro trials seem to indicate significant anti-cancer properties when moringa extracts were used upon certain types of cancer cells, chiefly ovarian, pancreatic and lung cancers. Some studies also prove that pre-treatment with moringa leaf

extract protected against radiation-induced liver damage. The extract is also thought to be chemo-protective (acting against chemotherapy's side effects) and is believed to enhance the efficacy of the chemotherapy drugs used against pancreatic cancer. As always, any such use needs to be worked out with your doctor.

Kumud Dadlani, who did her master's in food studies from Italy's University of Gastronomic Sciences, undertakes research on food sources. She also volunteers at Vrindavan Farm, not far from Mumbai. The farm supplies moringa in all its forms, fresh, dried and powdered, on order. "The leaves are highly nutritious but tend to lose out on nutrients if they're not handled with care or cooked too much," advises Dadlani. "We dry the leaves and flowers and make herbal teas from it. You can also add fresh leaves to any dal at the end."

I HAVE MY OWN moringa story. When a close relative had a tense shoulder that made raising his arm painful, Mumbai naturopath Raj Merchant was confident he had just the thing to help him. He sat him down and massaged an olive green balm into his shoulder for a few minutes. We continued that at home for a few days and his arm was as good as new. That same balm has since helped all of us with stiff necks and other aches and pains.

"What's in it?" I nagged relentlessly till Merchant revealed the secret weapon: moringa seed oil. Moringa oil is also in his home-made formula for falling hair. In fact moringa oil, also known as ben oil, has been prized for centuries in Egypt as a moisturiser and a perfume base. It has also become a mainstream beauty ingredient. The Body Shop, for instance, has a complete moringa skin care range.

Based on traditional wisdom, studies at Sweden's Uppsala University show that crushed moringa seeds put into water would cause the smallest impurities to clump together, which would then make it simpler to filter or siphon out. Polluted water can be cleared this way before being boiled and used for drinking. In a new study, researchers from Uppsala also show that moringa seeds can be employed industrially for the separation of different materials.

The tree has always been attractive to look at, especially when in full bloom with creamy white, delicately fragrant flowers. In some places they prune and coppice it to encourage fresh growth and to keep it from becoming too tall to reach anything. Madhu Reddy lets a few trees grow tall "for nesting birds."

Moringa features among the "celebrity superfoods" for 2015. Who knows, when a Hollywood star like Lily Cole swears by the goodness of moringa, it may finally find pride of place here in its home country.

Surprising Things That Are Contagious

BY THE PHYSICIANS OF *THE DOCTORS*

GERMS AREN'T the only things you have to worry about "catching." Emotions are also infectious, according to research on social contagions: moods and behaviours that spread from person to person. We like to think we're in control of our well-being, but this research shows that traits and choices of our friends—and even our friends' friends—have a powerful effect on ours. Here are some unexpected infections and our advice on how to inoculate yourself.

HAPPINESS

On the other hand, positive feelings also rub off, according to a seminal study of almost 5000 people by researchers at Harvard and the University of California. When you feel happy, a friend who lives within 1.5 kilometres is 25 percent more likely to feel happy, and neighbours are 34 percent more likely to feel happy. The same data found that an extra $5000 [₹3,14,000] increased happiness by about two percent, a much lower impact than what's gained by having a joyful friend of a friend (a second-degree connection), which can boost your own good feelings by 10 percent.

© BEDNAREK-ART.COM/ALAMY

6 BODY QUIRKS YOU CAN "CATCH"

Yawning, laughing, itching, coughing, vomiting, and crying are all socially contagious. Yawning is so infectious, says psychologist Robert R. Provine, author of *Curious Behavior,* that we yawn when we see, hear, or even read about someone else doing it. "We are often herd animals, not in full conscious control of our behaviour," adds Provine. Scientists theorize that sharing these quirks conferred an evolutionary advantage: Laughter is a form of bonding; scratching an itch, a safety precaution. (Your brain may think, hey, their fleas could jump ship and infest me.) Yawning could be how cavemen ancestors synchronized their sleep-wake schedules.

STRESS

The brain is hardwired to detect stress in other people, such as increases in breathing rate. This triggers a cascade of our own stress hormones, Heidi Hanna, executive coach and author of *Stressaholic,* told us. And you don't need to be in the same room to catch someone else's stress, which is transmittable via e-mail, texts, and social media. (Curt responses could signal someone is under a tight deadline, for example.) When you feel stressed, take breaks and get enough sleep—that's not selfish. It benefits everyone around you.

RESTAURANT ORDERS

Diners are happier when they order entrées that are similar nutritionally to those of their companions, found research from the University of Illinois, USA. If you're watching your waistline, place your order first so you're not tempted by your pals' cravings.

NEGATIVE THINKING

First year students randomly paired with roommates highly prone to brooding were likely to "catch" their negative-thinking style after only three months, found a study from the University of Notre Dame, USA. Recognize that other people may influence how you respond to life's challenges.

QUITTING SMOKING

The same research team found that when one person quit smoking, friends and family members became 36 percent less likely to smoke. The ripple effect: Even very casual acquaintances of the quitter became 20 percent less likely to light up.

Leave Fido safely in the house while you work

Home Alone

BY ELIZABETH HAMES

PET OWNERS may wish they could cuddle their furry companions all day long, but someone's got to bring home the kibble. Here are some tips for leaving your four-legged charges on their own.

TIRE THEM OUT Some dogs are happy to sleep all day, but puppies and breeds such as border collies and huskies were born to run, says Sarah Pennington, owner of a dog-training company. Fit in a vigorous walk—between 30 and 60 minutes—before work.

CONTAIN, DON'T CRATE Nature calls for young dogs about every half-hour, but resist putting your canine in a crate. Instead, keep them in a safe and chew-free area with access to food, water, toys, their crate and a spot for them to do their business.

PLAY MIND GAMES Even the most docile of pets can howl or gnaw out of boredom or separation anxiety. Serve your dog breakfast in a feeding toy that has them unlock a puzzle to access their food. Give indoor cats a gizmo that taps into their wild instincts, such as a noise-making crinkle ball.

KEEP WATCH, BIG BROTHER STYLE You can supervise, talk to and play with your pet while at work via your computer or smartphone app. Video chat with your animal over Skype by setting up an account for them and enabling the "auto answer" feature. As long as your home computer is on, your pet's Skype will always pick up when you call.

ISTOCKPHOTO

The benefits of small talk

Gab Is Great

BY CHANTAL TRANCHEMONTAGNE

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE: in a lift, a waiting room, in line at the bank or on an airplane, surrounded by people who are, like us, deeply focused on their smartphones or, worse, struggling with the uncomfortable silence.

What's the problem? It's possible that we all have compromised conversational intelligence. It's more likely that none of us initiate a conversation because it's awkward and challenging, or we think it's annoying and unnecessary. But the next time you find yourself among strangers, consider that small talk is worth the trouble. The experts say it's an invaluable social ritual that results in big benefits, both personal and professional.

It's a start

Dismissing small talk as trivial is easy, but we can't forget that deep relationships wouldn't even exist if it weren't for casual conversation. Small talk is the grease for social interaction, says Bernardo Carducci, director of the Shyness Research Institute at America's Indiana University Southeast. "Every great romance and each big business deal begins with small talk," he explains. "The key to successful small talk is learning how to connect with others, not just communicate with them." According to Carducci, exploring common ground in conversation—even about something as trivial as the weather or the long lineup—works towards forging bonds between humans.

Happy is as happy does

"Big talk," substantial conversation with greater impact on our lives, is obviously essential to our happiness. But it's important not to overlook the value of small talk, either.

In a 2014 study, Elizabeth Dunn, associate professor of psychology at

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Canada's University of British Columbia, recruited people on their way into a coffee shop. One group was asked to seek out an interaction with its barista; the other, to be as efficient in its exchanges as possible. The results showed that those who chatted briefly with their server reported significantly higher positive emotions, not to mention a considerably better coffee shop experience. "It's not that talking to the barista is better than talking to your husband," says Dunn. "But interactions with more peripheral members of our social network actually matter for our well-being also."

Dunn's findings arguably complement research released in 2013 by Andrew Steptoe of University College London. Steptoe reported that socially isolated seniors died at a higher rate than those with regular social interactions, whether through church, social clubs or contact with friends and relatives.

Making the connection

Dunn believes that people who reach out to strangers feel a significantly greater sense of belonging, a bond with others. Carducci believes nurturing this sense of community starts with small talk. "Small talk is the cornerstone of civility," he says. "When you connect with people through conversation, you're much less likely to mistreat them or be mistreated by them."

BOY TALK, GIRL TALK

Businessmen who engage in chit-chat get better results than their female counterparts, according to a report presented last August at the annual meeting of New York's Academy of Management. The study stated that men "may profit a great deal from showing communal behaviours" because, compared to women, men are seen "as less communicative, sociable or concerned about others."

A boon for business

When it comes to the working world, casual conversation is essential, too. "One of the biggest predictors of career success is verbal fluency," says Carducci. Small talk should be viewed as the warm-up that conveys key information about you, like goodwill, trustworthiness and a willingness to cooperate.

These are the things that help seal the deal, according to Debra Fine, author of *The Fine Art of Small Talk*, a can't-miss for business people. "You can negotiate a contract, make a presentation, sell a widget or promote your services, but unless you integrate small talk, you will not develop a business friendship," she explains. "All things being equal, people do business with their friends."

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NEWS FROM THE

World of Medicine

BY KELSEY KLOSS

Why Hospitals Are Embracing Copper

Hospital-bed railings can transmit infection-causing bacteria to patients, but in a trial at three US hospitals, introducing handrails made with copper—which naturally kills bacteria, yeasts, and viruses—lowered infection rates by 58 percent. The trial hospitals and others are considering switching more surfaces to copper. An Iowa hospital, for example, has already installed everything from copper light-switch plates to toilet flushers.

More Yogurt, Less Diabetes

One additional serving of yogurt (curd) a day is linked with an 18 percent lower risk of type 2 diabetes, according to a large Harvard study. Researchers hypothesize that yogurt's probiotics may help improve insulin sensitivity and reduce inflammation, but more clinical trials are needed to determine this. Total dairy consumption was not associated with diabetes risk, and the study didn't differentiate between yogurt types.

Health Risk in Your E-mail

Here's a simple way to feel less stressed: Sign out of e-mail. For two weeks, Canadian researchers assigned more than 120 adults to either check their inboxes only three times a day or to check as often as possible (about the same number of times they normally would). After the first week, participants switched scenarios. For most people, checking e-mail less frequently significantly lowered overall daily stress levels.

A Drug Cure for Hepatitis C

A newly [US] FDA-approved treatment, Viekira Pak, could be a game changer for patients with hepatitis C, the most common cause of liver cancer and transplantation. According to new research in the *New England Journal of Medicine,* an oral combination drug regimen cured hepatitis C in 97 percent of the 30 liver transplant patients studied. The new treatment is taken by patients for 24 weeks or less and has a higher success rate and a lower risk of organ rejection than other classic treatments.

Silent Signs of Cancer

More than half of 1700 participants in a recent British study reported signs of a malignancy, such as unexplained coughing or bleeding, but only 2 percent of them thought cancer was a possibility. Patients ignored not only subtle signs like changed urination habits (a bladder cancer symptom) but also more obvious signs like lumps. Researchers say this shows that opportunities for early diagnosis are being missed and that patients need to see their doctors sooner when something is abnormal.

Swallowing Capsules, Now Made Simple

Spoonful of sugar won't help the medicine go down? In a recent German study, a different approach helped 90 percent of patients with difficulty swallowing large capsules: Put the pill on your tongue, take a sip of water, and tilt your head forward as you swallow. Capsules (but not tablets) are lighter than water, so they naturally float towards your throat when you lean forward. Still, an earlier study showed that only 2 percent of participants knew to bend forward.

When Chest Pain Isn't an Asthma Symptom

In a new study of nearly 7000 asthma patients (average age: 62), those with cases severe enough to require daily medication were 60 percent more likely to have a heart attack, stroke, or related condition within ten years than those without asthma. Researchers don't know the exact link (they plan to study the effect of daily asthma medication and chronic inflammation). Experts urge asthma patients to seek prompt medical care if they experience any chest pain, as it is a common symptom of both asthma and heart disease.

Foods Making You Forgetful

A known heart threat, trans fat—found in foods like margarine and cookies—may also mess with memory. In a recent study presented at an American Heart Association meeting, researchers evaluated the trans fat consumption of about 1000 healthy men and gave them memory tests. Each additional gram of trans fat eaten per day was linked to poorer performance on the test.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CLAIRE BENOIST

Web Dependence

BY ANNE ROUMANOFF

"DO YOU HAVE INTERNET?" That's the first question I ask when I arrive somewhere on holiday. I feel important and thoroughly modern; in fact, I'm just being dreadfully pretentious and outing myself as incapable of spending a single day unconnected. I'm meant to use my computer for work, but in fact I do lots of totally useless things on it.

- Googling people I haven't seen for 20 years. This brings pitiful little surprises like learning that the prettiest girl at high school has turned into a blubbery big lump.
- Looking at property ads without any intention of buying or renting.
- Reading Facebook pages of people I don't know, so I can fantasize about their life.
- Clicking on an ad offering weight loss without a diet.
- Reading every gory detail of a trivial news story.
- Watching a video that's gone viral. And reading all the comments.

If my children ask me something when I'm at the screen I respond in grunts and murmurs: "Hmmm... yeah ... Not right now, you can see I'm working. Hold on ..."

The other day, however, when I received an e-mail asking, "Mummy, what's for lunch?" I told myself that I had to tackle my web dependency, urgently. I swore before witnesses that I'd do without the computer for a week. But first I keyed in the search term "Web addict" and got 4,590,000 results on Google. I'm just going to have a quick look at them and tomorrow I'll pull the plug—I promise!

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The shocking truth behind those one-star scores

Why Good Customers Write Bad Online Reviews

BY DAVID STREITFELD FROM *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

A NEW STUDY reveals an unexpected source of "fake" negative online reviews. Surprisingly, they are not penned by competitors—they may come from a company's most devoted consumers. "For every 1000 customers, about 15 write reviews, and one is writing negative reviews of products he hasn't bought," says study coauthor Duncan Simester of the MIT Sloan School of Management.

The study, by Simester and Eric Anderson of Northwestern University in the US, examined thousands of reviews of an unnamed apparel company. Overall, they estimated about 5% of cases where the customer had not bought the item. They also noted these reviews were much more negative than the others.

Simester said the reviews go something like this:

- "I should have read all the negative reviews before ordering. Please bring back the old style."
- "I ordered this item over your website. Why is it that good designs are always changed? Please go back to the original."

The cranky customers are acting as "self-appointed brand managers." In other words, they are venting. As an example, the study mentions that Harley-Davidson's customers were upset when the company introduced a line of fragrances. They took it personally. The review forum gives loyal customers a simple, direct means of expressing their displeasure. As Simester put it in an interview, "Your best friends are your worst critics."

For the rest of us, the lesson is this: read reviews, but never place your full trust in them. What seems to be the voice of the masses may be the voice of a few.

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Green your life by cutting down on excess waste

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

BY RENEE SYLVESTRE-WILLIAMS

WE HUMANS ARE prolific garbage producers. Between flyers, bulky packaging, junk mail, food and clothing, waste is a huge part of our lives. Cutting down is easy.

When You Shop

Be careful where you buy. Shopping online means a lot of packaging (clothes, shoes, etc). If you do shop online, try to purchase everything at the same time so you only have to deal with the excess materials once.

Bring a basket or cloth bag with you when grocery shopping. If you frequent the supermarket, save the egg cartons and fruit containers to reuse them. Shop less, buy more. Instead of purchasing for the day or the week, consider getting the largest product you can use before it spoils and parcelling it out into smaller reusable containers.

What You Receive

Switch to e-bills. For most companies, it's just a matter of clicking a button to make the switch from paper to electronic bills. Some retailers will e-mail you your receipt instead of handing you a paper copy, too—just ask.

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When You Cook

Use every scrap. Keep the ends of vegetables and animal bones for stock, and buy beets and carrots with the greens attached so you can sauté the greens for a side dish. Plan your meals. Write down everything you need to buy to cook for the week, including condiments, side dishes, coffee and even wine. That way, you won't throw out unused, spoiled food at the end of each week or month.

What You Wear

Buy less clothing, buy better quality clothing and learn how to do simple sewing repairs. Darning socks and mending sweaters will cut down on the number of items you'd normally toss in the trash.

Instead of dumping fast-fashion clothing, be mindful of how you're washing it. Clothes will last longer if you're careful what you wash together. The old rule of separating whites, darks and colours still applies. Wash jeans inside out to keep the colour vibrant. Handwash your lingerie to help your pieces last longer—agitation from the washing machine can damage bras and other delicate items, and their elastic bands.

Recycle your worn-out wares. Turn fabric from clothing that's too old to wear into reusable cleaning cloths for chores around the house. R

CELLULOID DREAMS

Ever worry that films are getting ever more violent and depressing? Well, help is at hand—Twitter hashtag #nicerfilmtitles attempts to reimagine famous movies in a far more pleasant light:

• Honey, I Dropped the Kids Off at School. • There Is a Country for Old Men, and They Have Golf There • Schindler's Relational Database • 28 Days Later Everything Was Just Fine • What's Gilbert Grape Eating? • Dr We'll See • The Hills Have Ice Cream • Rosemary's False Positive • Tea on the Orient Express • A Chocolate Orange • Dial M for Macaroons • 12 Amiable Men • There Might Be a Little Blood • Chill, Bill • Conan the Gardener

Apocalypse Really Far Off Into the Future, So Please Don't Worry.

As Kids See It

"Congrats, Dad, only 10 swear words this trip. I think we're looking at a personal best."

SUSAN CAMILLERI KONAR

MY SIX-YEAR-OLD SON, Punarvasu, and I were watching a TV documentary on Adi Shankaracharya, the 8th century philosopher-saint from Kerala, about whom I'd spoken before the show. As the movie opened with visuals of lush green forests, my boy asked, "Were the trees green in those days?"

"Why, yes," I said. "What colour did you expect?"

"Black and white," he replied.

AIR COMMODORE SHIRISH KUMAR MAIRAL (RETD), *Indore, MP*

ONE MORNING at the table, my two-year-old son, Owen, declared, "I'm a witch!" He pointed his wand at me and said, "I'm going to turn you into a frog."

"Ribbit," I said, playing along.

Then he said, "I'm going to turn you into a cat."

"Meow," I responded. He went on to turn me into a dog ("woof"), a lion ("roar") and a sheep ("baa").

Finally he said, "I'm going to turn you into a teddy bear." He then gave me a hug.

MARTIN HICKEY

AS MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD son was getting ready to take a bath, I asked if he could turn off the tap once the tub was full. "How will I know how high the water should be?" he asked, seated in the tub.

Seeing a freckle on his stomach, I said, "When it reaches that freckle, shut the tap off."

Amazed, he said, "So that's why that freckle is there."

JANET NEWBATT

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Shocking Notes

OVER-THE-TOP TRENDS

IN PARTS OF ASIA, dental braces have become a sign of prosperity. Whether their teeth are crooked or as straight as pillars, kids in Thailand, Indonesia, and China have been flocking to beauty salons to have superficial but fashionable braces put in (they aren't as complicated as the real deal). This trend is so popular that in Thailand, where the phonies are banned, a "fake-braces black market" has popped up.

HIPSTER ALERT! Non-hirsute New Yorkers who crave the scruffy look are shelling out as much as $7000 for beard transplants. During the operation, a surgeon takes hair from the scalp or chest and carefully inserts it into the face.

NOW, THIS IS THINKING outside the box! Undertakers are posing the deceased in death as they might have appeared in life. At a New Orleans funeral home in the US, one late woman was seated at a table with a can of beer in front of her and a cigarette in her hand. At another parlour, the body of a boxer was arranged standing in a boxing ring, and a deceased paramedic was propped up behind the wheel of an ambulance.

UNHAPPY WITH the direction of your life? Try plastic surgery on the lines of your palms. The operation is all the rage in Japan among those who believe the lines dictate one's future. According to one doctor, most men prefer to change creases associated with money and business, while women seek to alter their love lines.

QUESTIONS HAVE been raised about the ethics of "slum tourism" but it's thriving in South Africa, India and Brazil. In Mumbai, the trend kicked off in 2005, with a tour operator offering visits to Dharavi, India's largest slum. According to the operator, their Dharavi tours have been rising annually. Some credit its growing popularity to the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*. Groups are limited to six tourists and photography is not allowed.

ILLUSTRATION BY NISHANT CHOKSI

These genius inventions bring hope and possibility to millions

6 WAYS TO Save THE World

#1 BIG PROBLEM
A Tiring Task

In many rural areas, women and girls are typically the ones who shoulder the arduous, time-consuming, and dangerous job of gathering water, often located far from their homes, which means they must forgo school and employment.

SIMPLE SOLUTION
Water Wheels

Two South African brothers, Hans and Piet Hendrikse, created the Q Drum from super-sturdy polyethylene so that it can be rolled or pulled across the bumpiest terrain without springing a leak. The Q Drum holds up to 50 litres of water and can also be used to transport grain and other foods.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RALPH SMITH

Purify water
Detect cancer
HEINZ
VINEGAR
Clean up cooking
Transport water
Prevent infections
Improve births

#2

BIG PROBLEM

Unsafe H_2O

One in nine people around the globe lacks access to clean drinking water, and as a result, more than 3.4 million end up dying every year from diseases—like diarrhea and typhoid—related to polluted water, ineffective sanitation, and poor hygiene. The youngest are most at risk: Some two million of the victims are children.

SIMPLE SOLUTION

A Smart Straw

The LifeStraw is a portable filter that eliminates 99.9 percent of all waterborne bacteria and parasites. Invented by the Swiss company Vestergaard, each straw can clean up to 1000 litres of water. The device has already been distributed in more than 64 countries.

#3

BIG PROBLEM

Cancer Epidemic

Cervical cancer remains the leading cause of cancer deaths among women in developing countries, due to a dearth of both trained medical professionals and easy, affordable ways to screen for the disease.

SIMPLE SOLUTION

A Vinegar Test

Scientists have devised a diagnostic technique that relies on common vinegar and requires minimal training to administer, and it has been shown to reduce cervical-cancer deaths by nearly one third. Jhpiego, a nonprofit organization affiliated with Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA, is now working to make the test available worldwide.

PROP STYLIST: SARAH GUIDO FOR HALLEY RESOURCES

BIG PROBLEM

#4 Toxic Cooking

Meal preparation can be a deadly chore in the developing world. About half the planet's population still cooks with solid fuels like dung, coal, and wood, and the air pollution from these sources is thought to lead to more than four million premature deaths a year.

SIMPLE SOLUTION

A Green Stove

African Clean Energy, a South African company, has invented a stove that works more efficiently (using 70 percent less fuel) and cleanly (creating 95 percent fewer harmful emissions) than traditional methods. The battery-powered appliance recharges via a solar panel, and it has a USB port to power cell phones and laptops.

BIG PROBLEM

#5 Lethal Home Births

Every day around the world, an estimated 800 women die from infections and hemorrhages incurred from childbirth or pregnancy complications. Many of the deaths occur in areas where births happen at home without medical care.

SIMPLE SOLUTION

A Basic Safety Kit

Bangladesh has had one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates, so the nonprofit organization BRAC created a low-cost solution: a ₹25 home-delivery kit that contains gauze, disinfecting carbolic soap, a sterile plastic sheet, a thread (to tie off the umbilical cord), and a surgical blade (to cut it). BRAC has distributed more than 2.6 million kits, which are credited with helping to reduce the maternal mortality rate by over 50 percent in the past decade.

#6

BIG PROBLEM

Unhygienic Periods

In Rwanda, 18 percent of menstruating girls and women miss, on average, 35 days of school and work each year because they cannot afford sanitary pads. To avoid skipping, some of them resort to unsafe alternatives like rags, leaves, and mud, which can lead to infections and other diseases.

SIMPLE SOLUTION

An Inexpensive Maxi Pad

Sustainable Health Enterprises (SHE), based in Rwanda and founded by Harvard Business School graduate Elizabeth Scharpf, makes pads from banana-tree fibres; the pads cost about ₹2 apiece. SHE buys the material, which is usually discarded, from two female-led banana cooperatives.

LEARN MORE, DO MORE

- When you purchase a LifeStraw (*buylifestraw.com*), Vestergaard distributes a portion of the proceeds to fund water purifiers in a developing country.
- To learn about contributing to a Q Drum project, e-mail info@qdrum.co.za
- African Clean Energy is giving its cookstoves to families headed by orphans in Lesotho. To find out more, go to *africancleanenergy.com*
- BRAC runs a variety of social, economic, and health-related programs in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. To read about its efforts, visit *bracusa.org*
- A donation of $100 (₹6200) can provide maxi pads to keep 140 girls in school for a year. Go to *sheinnovates.com* for more information.
- Jhpiego aids women and kids worldwide; read about its work at *jhpiego.org*

How GiveIndia was born and raised to make donating to charity everybody's concern

INDIA'S GOOD *Giving Machine*

BY ASHOK MAHADEVAN

IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'm using the internet to donate money and I'm nervous. Will I, sitting at home, be able to find a worthwhile charity? Will I be able to make my donation without having to fumble through an interminable number of pop-ups and steps? And will I ever know whom I've helped, and how?

I go to *www.giveindia.org*, the website of GiveIndia, a trailblazing Indian organization which was among the first anywhere to enable online donations. On its home page, I see that I can choose to contribute anything from ₹250 to ₹25,000 to any of over 200 thoroughly vetted charities from around the country. Each of these charities in turn will offer me specific causes for which I can donate. And I'll also be sent details of whom I've helped, so that I can, if I wish, independently

ILLUSTRATED BY KUNAL BELE

meet them and verify that my money has been well used.

Since I live in Mumbai, it makes sense for me to select a charity in my city. As a former cancer patient, I'd like to help a needy person with a major health problem. And I'm prepared to donate up to ₹4000 for a really worthy cause.

I'm now offered 10 donation options, including ₹1200 to sponsor a breast prosthesis for a woman with cancer and ₹1000 to pay for the monthly rations of a poor HIV patient. But the one that appeals most to me is ₹4000 to "Save a very poor kidney patient's life by sponsoring his/her monthly requirement of eight dialyses."

The Mumbai NGO that offers this option is called MESCO (for Modern Educational Social & Cultural Organization). It's no fly-by-night outfit. It was founded nearly 50 years ago to help the poor, in various ways, to "live a better tomorrow."

Opting to pay by credit card, I notice that, to cover its costs, GiveIndia is charging me an additional ₹400—ten percent of my donation—thus increasing my total outlay to ₹4400. That's not much, given that it is significantly below the "industry average" of 30 to 40 percent for fundraising from individuals.

Within seconds of clicking on 'Pay' I'm e-mailed a receipt, which I can also use to claim a tax benefit. And I'm informed that I'll get details of the beneficiary in a few months. I'm willing to wait.

SINCE 2000, when it started, GiveIndia has raised more than ₹250 crore for charity from some three lakh Indians. The money has been used to pay for a whole host of causes—from repairing a village's check dam to nets for fishermen, from walkers for the elderly to the college fees of underprivileged students. GiveIndia has also introduced new and convenient ways of donating, prodded NGOs to become more transparent, and vigorously promoted philanthropy in the country.

GiveIndia's goal is to get all middle- and upper-class Indians to donate two percent of their annual income to the poor. And while it may still be very far from that target, its work has been widely praised. "GiveIndia is one of the most interesting innovators in philanthropy on the planet," says Katherine Fulton, president of the Monitor Institute, an American social change consultancy.

GiveIndia is the brainchild of Venkat Krishnan N., a remarkable IIM-Ahmedabad graduate who gave up a well-paying corporate career to work for the underprivileged.

It wasn't a sudden decision. Even as a schoolboy, Venkat, now 44, was haunted by the inequalities of the world around him. "Some of my schoolmates lived in nice two-bedroom houses," he says. "Others in a slum. It was so unfair."

From the time he was in Class Seven, Venkat was determined to do all he

could to create a more just society. But it took him a while to figure out a way best suited to his temperament and talents. A brilliant student, he sailed through both the IIM and the Indian Statistical Institute entrance exams. And although passionately fond of maths, he opted for the IIM. "With an MBA you can earn a lot very quickly," he says, "and that can give you the freedom to do what you really want."

At the IIM, Venkat interned one summer with the government's Khadi Village Industries Commission. But that only confirmed his conviction that joining the IAS was not his way to help the poor. Nor was it by living and working amongst them. He had to use his brains and management skills to find another way of creating a more just India.

ON GRADUATING, Venkat worked in the corporate world for three years, paying off his debts. Then along with one of his IIM professors and two batch-mates, he founded a school in Ahmedabad that would provide a first-rate education not just to middle-class children but to a large number of poor students too.

In 1998, Venkat spent a couple of months backpacking around the US, visiting schools. He was struck by how philanthropic middle-class Americans were, volunteering their services and donating to worthwhile causes. In one town he visited, the residents even voted to impose a special tax on themselves to fund a local school gym.

His American visit set Venkat thinking. He had seen a number of small, little-known NGOs in different parts of India successfully using innovative methods to educate poor children. Nearly all, though, had had to struggle for money. On the other hand, there was a large untapped market of donors: Indian professionals, including his classmates, were now earning large salaries. But they held back from donating any of it because they didn't know which charities were trustworthy. Why not start an agency, Venkat thought, that would thoroughly investigate NGOs, certify those that were worthy, and encourage people to donate to them? Nothing like that existed in the country.

> **Why not start an agency, Venkat thought, that would investigate NGOs and certify those that were worthy.**

Venkat's idea caught the attention of Nachiket Mor, another IIM-Ahmedabad graduate who headed the ICICI Bank's anti-poverty department. But Nachiket was keen on more than an NGO-

Venkat Krishnan (in a striped blue T-shirt, second row) with GiveIndia colleagues at a 2014 fund-raising event. Although he's the founder and remains a member of its board, Venkat no longer plays any role in GiveIndia's day-to-day management.

GIVEINDIA

certifying organization. His department was experimenting with using the internet for various causes, and he suggested that Venkat raise money online. It was an audacious proposal because, at that time, there were only two or three agencies in the world doing this. But Venkat, a technology buff, readily agreed.

Many of his friends were skeptical. "I told him he was mad, that people won't donate money online," says Annabel Mehta, currently president of Apnalaya, a Mumbai NGO. "Luckily, he ignored me." (Last year, Apnalaya received more than ₹15 lakh in donations through GiveIndia.)

After ICICI Bank promised an office and ₹79 lakh for the venture's first two years, Venkat began looking for young professionals to hire. His first recruit was Kshitij Bisen, a management graduate who wanted to be a writer. "Venkat interviewed me in a *chai*-shop outside the IIM," recalls Bisen, who worked for GiveIndia for a couple of years and is now a journalist in New Delhi.

Venkat didn't always make a good impression on his recruits. Tejas Merh Desai, a young chartered accountant disillusioned with the corporate world, confesses that she was initially turned off by Venkat when she first met him. "His shirt was not ironed," she recalls. "A button was missing. And he had a superior air about him. It was as if he didn't care what impression he created."

But when Venkat began telling her

his plans, Tejas was all ears. "They were so clear, so sensible," she says, "And he was doing something nobody else was."

To understand the concerns of potential donors, Venkat commissioned a five-city survey. It threw up an interesting finding: people were far more likely to donate if they could choose the way their money would be used.

"Donors want control over their money," Venkat says. "They don't like not knowing, for instance, whether it was used to pay an electricity bill or a teacher's salary. You've therefore got to give them precise options. The option 'To pay for a secondary schoolchild's textbooks for a year' will attract more donors than a vague 'To pay for a child's education.' "

But NGOs were not used to offering such choices, so Venkat and his team had to do it for them initially. "We thoroughly sliced and diced each NGO's budget and created credible options that donors could understand," Venkat says.

Venkat also insisted that every donor should receive a feedback report including photographs. "Seeing the face of the child whose books you paid for or the village well which was dug with your money," Venkat says, "gives you confidence that your donation has been well used."

Getting NGOs to start such practices wasn't always easy. Social activists are passionately committed to their work, but are usually not diligent about documenting the results. It also took time for GiveIndia's young professionals to appreciate the constraints that understaffed and under-funded Indian NGOs work under.

Working conditions at GiveIndia weren't great either: temperatures rise to well above 40 degrees C in Ahmedabad, but the GiveIndia office wasn't air-conditioned; the staff had to pay for their tea or coffee; when travelling on work, they had to take the cheapest mode of transport.

Venkat wasn't just tight-fisted; he was a slave driver too. He cursed freely and could reduce people to tears. On the other hand, he was much harder on himself than on anyone else, and encouraged his colleagues to take their own decisions.

"I felt very empowered," says Pushpa Aman Singh, a former chief operating officer of GiveIndia and now chief executive of GuideStar India, which provides information on NGOs. "I grew enormously as a person when working for him."

There was also a sensitive side to Venkat, which very few of his colleagues saw. One who did was Kshitij Bisen. Kshitij was gay but very much in the closet. When Venkat came by chance to know of it, he summoned Bisen. "I was very apprehensive," Bisen recalls. "But Venkat was very supportive. In fact, he gave me the courage to be more honest about myself. He's like a coconut. Very hard outside and very soft inside."

GIVEINDIA LAUNCHED its website with nine certified NGOs on 15 September 2000. But donations trickled in disappointingly slowly until 26 January 2001, when a massive earthquake struck Gujarat. A special page for earthquake relief was quickly added. Within a day, the site recorded more than a million hits and crashed. It was put up again and by March end, GiveIndia had received donations worth nearly ₹1 crore.

Ahmedabad experienced several tremors during days that followed. But initially, Venkat and his colleagues remained in their 10th floor office, running down whenever they heard a rumble. Once, Pushpa Aman Singh rushed down without her chappals. "When I wondered aloud how I was going to get home barefoot," Pushpa recalls, "Venkat coolly climbed ten flights despite being warned not to and brought my chappals down."

Over the years, GiveIndia has pioneered new ways of giving. In 2003, it started a program under which employees in corporations can opt to donate anything upwards of ₹50 every month to an NGO of their choice. The money is automatically deducted from their salaries, and they receive feedback reports.

"Our employees love this program," says Amit Aggarwal, senior vice president of the IT company Genpact. "More than 10,000 Genpact employees in India contribute. Many of them are youngsters who earn relatively small salaries." Last year, GiveIndia raised more than ₹13 crore in this fashion from 50,000 employees in 120 companies.

Another GiveIndia innovation involved a unique way of fundraising at marathons. When Mumbai's first international marathon was held in 2004, GiveIndia was the official charity partner. But it wasn't able to raise much. So, the following year, it came up with an ingenious strategy. It divided the runners into different categories according to the amount they pledged, including a "Dream Team" for well-known film stars, sportsmen and heads of corporations. Sachin Tendulkar agreed to run—and although, at the last minute, police wouldn't let him for fear of his being crushed by the crowd—the event raised nearly ₹4 crore for charity.

Venkat also gave his friends tips on how to raise more money. Before the first Mumbai marathon, ICICI Bank's

> **GiveIndia started a program wherein employees in corporations can donate every month to an NGO.**

Nachiket Mor had written to his acquaintances, which included some top industrialists, asking for contributions. He got ₹5000 each from several of them. Next year, at Venkat's suggestion, Mor wrote again to all of them, saying his personal contribution was ₹10 lakh and requested them to match it. Several promptly complied. "The secret is benchmarking," Venkat grins.

In 2006, GiveIndia started i-Give, in which anyone can create their own page on the GiveIndia website. This has proved especially useful to individuals who wish to raise more than they can personally afford for a cause. Typical is Sudhir Kulkarni of Ahmedabad whose beloved elder sister died of ovarian cancer. In her memory, Kulkarni decided to collect money for an NGO that looked after poor women cancer patients. So he registered with GiveIndia, opted for an NGO on its list, and sent e-mails to everyone he knew offering to match whatever they contributed. He also posted the appeal regularly on his Facebook page. Within three months he'd raised nearly ₹7 lakh.

FROM EARLY 2007, Venkat began saying he wanted to leave GiveIndia. "It's extremely rare for the founder of an NGO to voluntarily resign," says Ujwal Thakar, his successor as CEO. "But that's Venkat for you."

Venkat explains his reason: "For the first few years an organization can grow on passion and fresh air," he says. "But once it's established it needs to be run by a person who is more forgiving, less demanding. I don't think I could be the CEO of a large company. I felt that the biggest obstacle to GiveIndia's future growth was me."

Whether or not that's correct, GiveIndia has continued to flourish under Venkat's successors. Meanwhile Venkat now spends much of his time promoting Daan Utsav or the Joy of Giving Week [see Reader's Digest, October 2014], a movement he started after leaving GiveIndia.

I'M IN THE home of Arbaz Haseeb Quarasshi, an 18-year-old whose kidneys have stopped functioning and whose life depends on getting dialysis twice a week. Each dialysis costs ₹550, but his father, a *zari* worker, earns only ₹6000 a month to support a family of five. I'd recently got an e-mail from GiveIndia stating that the ₹4400 I'd donated a few months earlier had been used to pay for about eight of Arbaz's dialyses.

Arbaz, who has just returned home from the hospital after a dialysis session, looks pale and small for his age. But he's in good spirits and sports a jaunty blue bandana around his neck to hide a surgically created fistula through which he receives dialysis. As he chatters away, I ask him what he would do if he could go back to school.

"Study hard," he says. "Learn all I can."

What more can any donor want?

VICTORIAN WAYS TO DIE

From billiard balls to unfortunate falls...
Some long-lost news stories about bizarre expiries

BY JEREMY CLAY
FROM *THE BURGLAR CAUGHT BY A SKELETON—AND OTHER SINGULAR TALES FROM THE VICTORIAN PRESS*

EXTRAORDINARY POISONING NEAR RUGBY

A most melancholy occurrence has just taken place in a farm house at Ashby St Ledgers, a village on the borders of Northamptonshire [UK].

It appears that Mr William Payne Cowley, a farmer living in that village with his mother (who is a widow) and his brothers, had his sheep dipped, or washed, last week. The object of this dipping or washing is the extermination of vermin, and for this purpose a strong mixture of arsenic and soft soap diluted with water is used.

On Tuesday morning last, Mr W.P. Cowley sent his brother, Mr Edwin Cowley, to the adjoining town of Daventry, where he purchased six pounds [over 2.5 kilos] of white arsenic and a barrel of soft soap weighing 30 pounds [about 13.5 kilos].

On the following morning, Mr W.P. Cowley and his mother prepared the sheep dipping mixture, in which some

(FRAME) © YAY MEDIA AS/ALAMY. ILLUSTRATIONS BY SRILATHA

lambs were washed. In this operation Mr Cowley and several of his labourers were employed.

After assisting her son in the preparation of the soap and arsenic, Mrs Cowley proceeded to make a batter pudding for the dinner of her family and the labourers and servants. By some means as yet unaccounted for, it appears that some arsenic must have become mixed with the pudding, for the whole of the persons who partook of it, ten in number, became violently sick just after dinner, and exhibited all the symptoms of being poisoned.

The best medical assistance in the neighbourhood was procured, but one man has already died, and another is not expected to survive; the others are all more or less affected.

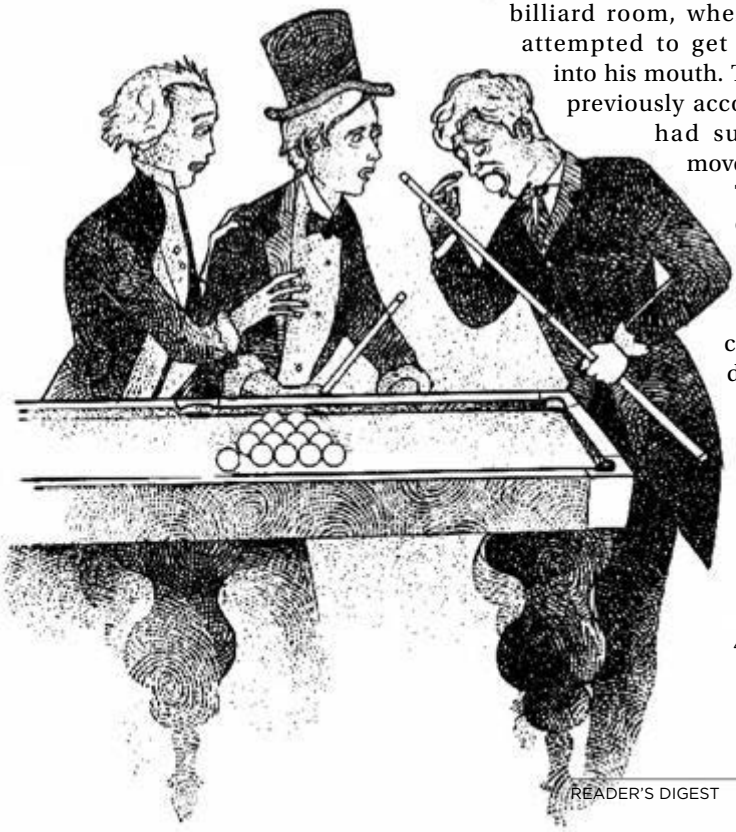
***Leeds Mercury,* 16 July 1862**

CHOKED BY A BILLIARD BALL

A singular death occurred on Wednesday night at a public house in Soho, London. Some men were in the billiard room, when one of them attempted to get a billiard ball into his mouth. This feat he had previously accomplished, and had successfully removed the ball.

This time, however, he failed to extract it, and it became fixed in his throat. A cab was immediately fetched, but while being removed to the hospital the unfortunate fellow expired.

The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent,* 4 November 1893

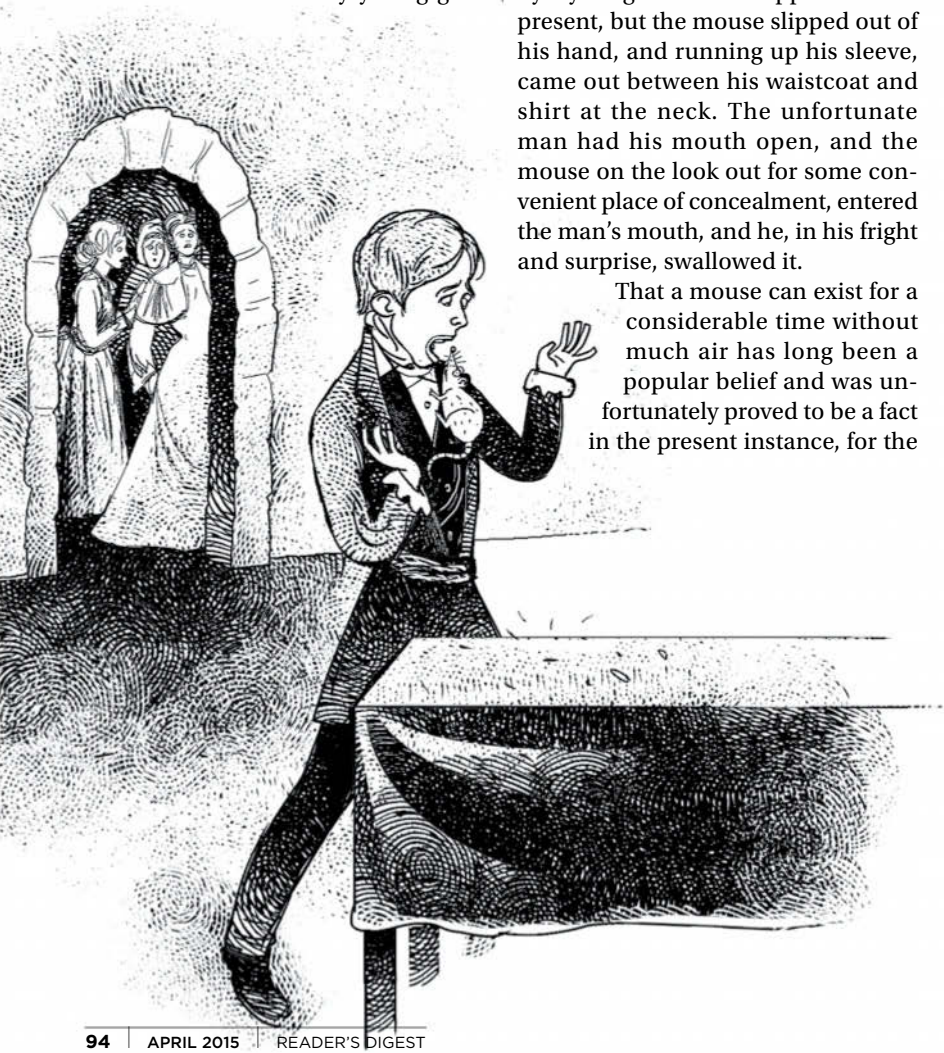


KILLED BY A MOUSE

An extraordinary occurrence has been brought to light at an inquest of a man in South London. It appears that in a workroom where many young girls were at work a mouse suddenly made its appearance on a table, causing, of course, considerable commotion and a general stampede.

The intruder was seized, however, by a young man who happened to be present, but the mouse slipped out of his hand, and running up his sleeve, came out between his waistcoat and shirt at the neck. The unfortunate man had his mouth open, and the mouse on the look out for some convenient place of concealment, entered the man's mouth, and he, in his fright and surprise, swallowed it.

That a mouse can exist for a considerable time without much air has long been a popular belief and was unfortunately proved to be a fact in the present instance, for the



mouse began to tear and bite inside the man's throat and chest, and the result was that the unfortunate fellow died after a little time in horrible agony.

Several witnesses having corroborated the above facts, and medical testimony as to the cause of death having been given, a verdict of accidental death was returned.

The *Manchester Evening News*, 31 December 1875

LAUGHED HIMSELF TO DEATH

Wesley Parsons, an aged and well-known farmer, died at Laurel, Indiana, [USA] under peculiar circumstances. While joking with friends he was seized with a spell of laughing, being unable to stop. He laughed for nearly an hour, when he began hiccoughing, and two hours later he died from exhaustion.

The *Star*, Guernsey, 14 December 1893

KILLED BY A COFFIN

Dr Lankester held an inquest on Saturday evening at the University College Hospital on the body of Henry Taylor, aged 66. The evidence of Mr E.J. Reading, an undertaker's foreman, and others, showed that on the 19th instant the deceased, with others, was engaged at a funeral at Kensal Green Cemetery.

The church service having been finished, the mourners proceeded in coaches towards the place of burial. The day being damp, the foreman directed the coaches with the mourners to proceed to the grave by the footway, and the hearse across the grass towards a grave-digger.

The coffin was moved from the hearse and being carried down a path only three feet [0.9 metre] wide, by six bearers, when orders were given to turn, so that the coffin, which was what is known in the trade as a four pound [almost two kilos] leaden one, should go head first.

While the men were changing, it is supposed that the deceased caught his foot against a sidestone and stumbled; the other bearers, to save themselves, let the coffin go, and it fell with great force on to the deceased, fracturing his jaw and ribs.

The greatest confusion was caused amongst the mourners who witnessed the accident, and the widow of the person about to be buried nearly went into hysterics.

Further assistance having been procured, the burial service was proceeded with, while the deceased was conveyed to the above-mentioned hospital, where he expired on the 24th instant.

The jury recommended that straps should be placed round coffins to prevent such accidents. Verdict—accidental death.

The *Illustrated Police News*, 2 November 1872

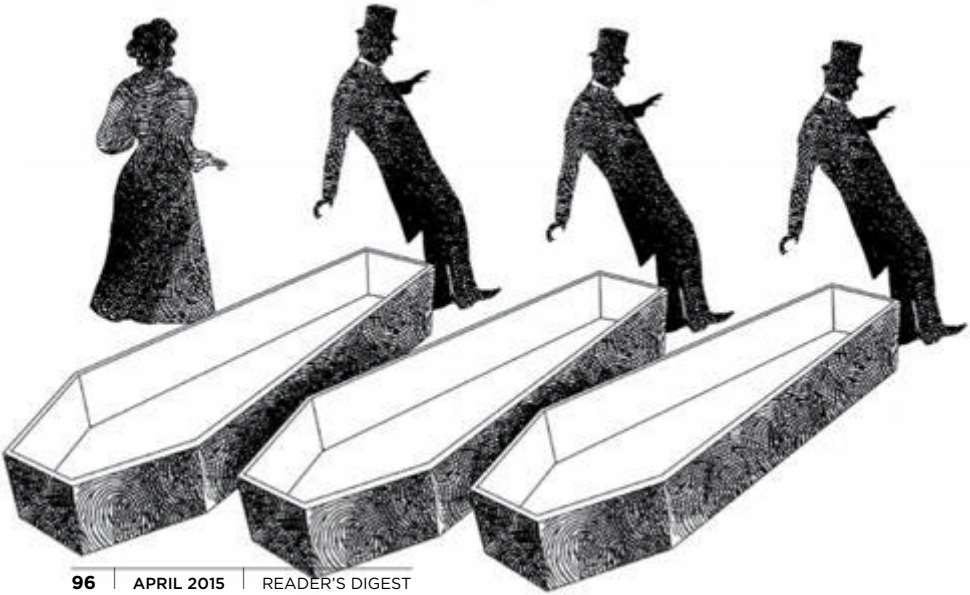
EXTRAORDINARY COINCIDENCES

One of the most singular coincidences ever recorded has taken place at a village named Martin's Valley, in Pennsylvania [USA], where three brothers of the name Truby, all following different trades, met with accidental deaths between 11 o'clock on the night of Friday, 14th August, and 11 o'clock on the following morning.

The first killed was John, aged 34, who was a signalman on the railway. He was running to alter a switch, when he fell over something on the line, and broke his neck.

Jason Truby, aged 36, worked in a quarry four miles [about 6.5km] from the village. The recent rains had filled several deep cavities in the quarry with water. Early on Saturday morning Jason went to work. A narrow hemlock board had been laid across one of the pits full of water, and he was walking over it when it tipped with him and threw him into the water. His head came in contact with the edge of the stones, stunning him. He drowned before aid could reach him.

Wyman Truby, 38 years old, was a miller. About half-past 10 o'clock on Saturday morning he was at work in the mill, when the flooring of a grain bin in the room above him gave way, and he was buried beneath hundreds of bushels of wheat. A boy who was in the mill ran out and gave the alarm, and several men hurried in and made efforts to extricate Truby; but the work could not be done in time. When he was taken out he had been dead some time.



The brothers died in ignorance of each other's death, and the messengers sent to inform their mother, a widow, met at her house. The succession of cruel blows so overwhelmed her that she is not expected to live.

Edinburgh Evening News,
2 September 1885

DEATH FOLLOWS A WAGER

The London *Mail*'s Paris correspondent says that two men in a tavern in the Latin quarter were boasting of their drinking powers, and one wagered 20 francs with the other he could drink 24 absinthes.

He won the bet, and proceeded home. Shortly afterwards his companion, who lived in the same house, left the tavern for his house. As he mounted the staircase he found the drinker dead, hanging over the banisters. He was so horrified that he fell down the stairs and broke his leg.

The *Midland Daily Telegraph,*
Coventry, 3 February 1899

EYE-CATCHING HEADLINES

A Dumb Man Cured by Excitement
The *Evening Telegraph*, Edinburgh, 9 August 1895

Elephants on the Loose. A Keeper Killed. Panic at a Concert
Western Times, 20 February 1900

Fearful Attack on a Steamer by Alligators—Three Seaman Devoured
The *Illustrated Police News*, 26 August 1871

Saved by Her Corset
The *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 25 September 1900

An Editor Horsewhipped by Chorus Girls
The *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 July 1893

Father and Son Killed by Mare and Foal The *Citizen*, Gloucester, 29 March 1895

Burglar Caught by a Skeleton
Dundee Courier, 26 February 1874

EXTRACTED FROM *THE BURGLAR CAUGHT BY A SKELETON – AND OTHER SINGULAR TALES FROM THE VICTORIAN PRESS* BY JEREMY CLAY, PUBLISHED BY ICON BOOKS (LONDON).

JUST MY LUCK

Research has found that because it makes you think positive thoughts, throwing salt over your shoulder can prevent bad luck. Or at least give you better luck than the guy behind you.

JIMMY FALLON

BEYOND

PHOTO BY CHRIS JONES

BELIEF

Even on an adventure cruise to Antarctica, the continent can be remote and mysterious

BY CHRIS JONES FROM *AFAR*

The writer photographed the* National Geographic Explorer *during a hike up an icy slope.

I BEGAN BELIEVING IN GHOSTS early one morning—at what would have been dawn if Antarctica bothered with dawns—on the bridge of the *National Geographic Explorer.*

I was mentored in the ways of unseen things by the ship's first mate, Piers Alvarez-Munoz, his name rivalled in its magnificence only by his beard. His radar screen was awash with green specks—ice floes and birds with about 3.5-metre wingspans. A snow squall had blown across the Drake Passage and we couldn't see much beyond the bow of the ship.

Alvarez-Munoz checked his charts and compasses, and plotted our course with a pencil because these waters defy even the most advanced machines. Then he nodded: Antarctica was in our immediate range, even though the only instrument able to find any sign of it was his heart.

After such a long journey, it was hard to accept that we were almost there. My 140 fellow passengers had come from across the world: flights first to Buenos Aires and then to Ushuaia, a small, colourful town at the bottom of Argentina. Then we had boarded the *Explorer* and nosed through the shimmering Beagle Channel, to our left the mountains of Argentina, to our right the slightly more dramatic mountains of Chile. We slipped into the Drake Passage sometime around midnight. The seas grew rougher where the Atlantic and Pacific met. Nearly 40 hours after we had pushed away from safe harbour, there stood Alvarez-Munoz, insisting that, any moment now, Antarctica would appear before us.

When it did not, he unrolled another chart to justify his belief in paranormal landmasses. The ocean, now the Southern one, was as much as 5500 metres deep here. But nearby, underwater peaks rose within 200 metres of the surface. No one had ever climbed or even seen these ranges, but that didn't mean they were not there.

It might seem impossible that there are destinations on this planet that we haven't visited, but in many ways Antarctica is an article of faith more than a hard physical fact.

"All the best mountains are hidden," Alvarez-Munoz said before he turned his binoculars back to the uniform grey in front of us.

Not long after, the wall of mist and snow opened up, and on the horizon to our right was a single iceberg, shaped like a triangle. Then came another, larger and to the left. Then another, the way seagulls foretell arrival at more conventional shores. At last, there was a small knob of grey rock in the distance, the first of the South Shetland Islands, the ambassadors of genuine Antarctica. It

Ninety-three percent of the world's mass of icebergs surround Antarctica.

© VOLODYMYR GOINYK/MASTERFILE

felt as though we had finally arrived. Alvarez-Munoz ran his fingers across his chart and extended his pencil line, and by the time he looked back up, the rock and everything that it represented had disappeared.

MONTHS LATER, my memories of that trip aren't like memories of other trips. There are no tall buildings, no roads or signs or music, no snapshots of indigenous faces, none of the usual time stamps given us by day and night. There was always light, the sun setting spectacularly before changing its mind at the last moment and rising again. When I close my eyes, there are a hundred shades of blue and white, snow and ice, sleeplessness and awe. I don't really remember specific locations, and I can't say I fully remember moments, even. I remember the gooseflesh and lumps in my throat.

"Expedition Day in the Weddell Sea!" the daily briefing read one afternoon. "Please listen for announcements regarding our plans, which will depend on weather and ice conditions." The Weddell Sea is among the more daunting bodies of water on Earth, a whirlpool trapped between the Antarctic Peninsula and Cape Norvegia in Queen Maud Land that gathers ice in all its tran-

sient forms: enormous tabular bergs; floes, white and sheetlike; bergy bits on their way to becoming ocean; and growlers, blue boulders floating like corks. One survey of the area found 30,000 icebergs in just 3900 square kilometres. From the bow it looks like a different planet where ice is a living thing. It snaps and howls and groans; it lifts and rolls and crashes. A brave decision was made: We would push south as far as we could, because at the end of it there just might be Emperor penguins.

> CELEBRATING IN THE SHIP'S LOUNGE WITH HIGH FIVES AND RAISED GLASSES, WE FELT AS THOUGH WE HAD REALLY ARRIVED NOW.

We stood on the bridge or the bow, looking out across the water and ice. Six killer whales popped up beside us, and one dived under the ship, from starboard to port, turning upside down to show off its white undercarriage.

Then fog and snow rolled in. Icebergs loomed; the *Explorer* passed over a bergy bit that shuddered down the hull of the ship. Everything was silver and spooky until the storm blew out and we found open water again. A sheet of ice appeared in the distance as wide as a plain, and through binoculars we could see some small dots on it. The crew let the currents draw us towards the ice. Our hull dug into it just hard enough to anchor us, and there they were: eight Emperor penguins taking the opening steps of their miles-long march back home, somewhere beyond our scope. Then Antarctica did what it does, and they were gone.

We turned around and retreated north. Celebrating in the ship's lounge with high fives and raised glasses, we felt as though we had really arrived now, as though we had finally completed each of our private unspoken quests. The *Explorer's* passengers were mostly older, and many of them possessed that particular brand of gratitude that comes with time and travel. I don't think I was the only one who had trouble holding it together. We had come all this way and cashed in so much good fortune for the outside chance that we might see Emperor penguins. And we did. In a world that can seem purpose-built and calculated, engineered for our safety and convenience, every part of that long-shot day felt as fleeting as luck itself. That feeling is what I remember, and that's why Antarctica remains impervious to memories. All of its settlements are temporary. Its borders migrate. Its landmarks are seasonal.

THROUGHOUT SIX DAYS in Antarctica, each one gorgeous and spec-

Emperor penguins near the Weddell Sea, along the southern coast of Antarctica.

© MASTERFILE

tacular, that overwhelming feeling of impermanence became almost sinister. At first it crept up in odd ways: penguin eggs cracked open by predators; killer whales prospecting for seals; bleached whale bones on a beach. We could fool ourselves that we were invulnerable, given our comforts, our bowls of ice cream and our hot chocolates spiked with whisky, and we could sleep soundly knowing that the right eyes watched over us. But there remained constant reminders that we were in parts that did not welcome us as warmly as our waiters did.

It happened to me twice. The first time, it was inside Orne Harbor, a tight crescent ringed by mountains and glaciers. We took a Zodiac [an inflatable boat] to shore and climbed through the snow to the top of a ridge. It was the most perfect day, skies as blue as the water, the sun shining, warm enough to strip off our jackets and sweaters. The ridge gave us a view across more mountains and glaciers through air so clean I could feel my lungs turning pink again.

We hiked and ass-tobogganed down some icy slopes, laughing and taking pictures. Some chinstrap penguins stopped and stared at us. It was a magical few hours, and I joked with one of our guides that I wouldn't be getting back on the ship. He wished me luck and smiled, but the way he said it had an edge to it. He knew I wouldn't stand a chance.

So I'm not sure why I soon did

maybe the dumbest best thing I've done. We were at Port Lockroy, an old British research station that's now a museum. It was time for a polar dip. Those passengers who dared could strip down to our shorts and drop into some of the coldest, darkest water on Earth. The guides asked if anyone thought they could stand that water for more than a minute. Four of us said yes. We were younger and stupider than everyone else on board.

> THE GUIDES ASKED IF ANYONE THOUGHT THEY COULD STAND THAT WATER FOR MORE THAN A MINUTE. FOUR OF US SAID YES.

Our vital signs would be monitored. I decided to wear a snorkelling mask, because I harboured some delusion that I'd have the physical wherewithal to sightsee. We trembled our way out of the ship, our bare feet curved around the edge of a Zodiac turned into a makeshift diving platform, and then we jumped.

It was a very long minute. Within seconds, my legs and arms went numb. My breathing became shallow, and my heart began to claw out of my chest like a cat from a bag. Nearly every drop of my blood rushed to my core, my body now its own lifeboat, organs and circulatory system first. I remembered to put my face into the water for a few seconds. Between my translucent, paralyzed feet, all I could see was a bottomless down. After more than a week without darkness, that water reminded me what night looked like, and it both thrilled and scared me.

Finally the minute was up. We clambered out and tied ourselves in knots trying to warm up. Our bodies were crimson. We said some very bad things a little too loudly, and I went straight to the dining room, ravenous, and ate a load of pizza.

Slowly the feeling came back to my digits, except for the middle finger of my right hand. All these months later, it still has a small circle of numbness at the tip. It's become my constant reminder of a trip that I can't really remember but for so many reasons want never to forget.

THE ICE WAS particularly widespread last winter; it had socked in five staffers from Palmer Station, the small US research outpost, for months beyond their scheduled finishes. Word had come that they would really like a ride home.

To get to them, we cruised through the Gerlache Strait and the Neumayer Channel, breaking up floes that were thick enough to carry seals. The powder steam of avalanches rose off the mountains around us and the ice

crackled like power lines. We turned down the Bismarck Strait, leaving a trail of open water in our wake that would soon disappear. Bergy bits thudded against our hull. And then Palmer Station came into view, a collection of blue metal-sided buildings, oil barrels, and shipping containers perched on grey rock.

The bridge and the bow were packed with spectators, and maybe 40 station residents were standing along the shore, cheering back at us. We saw a man, tall with long hair, pumping his fists like a concertgoer. He was one of the five overdue, and now we could pick out the others just from their joy.

The Palmerites—scientists and support staff—were ferried across in a Zodiac. Watching them board, I thought they must have been feeling as though they were leaving the moon. In truth they felt as though they had landed on it. The tall man pumping his fists had spent seven months at Palmer Station, through the relentless winter and into the non-thaw of spring. He went straight to the ship's bar, and the look on his face when he took his first sip of draught beer made us want to know what he knew. A crush of curious passengers surrounded him and the others. They looked almost alarmed by their peculiar celebrity. In their months away, they had become shadows of their former selves. They had forgotten the sensation of endless hot showers and the smell of oranges, but they had also forgotten how to survive among the living.

When we returned to the Beagle Channel, Chile now to our left and Argentina to our right, the Palmer Station Five stood at the top of the ship. They looked at Ushuaia the way we had looked at the South Shetland Islands all those days earlier, before we had learnt to believe. Spend enough time in Antarctica, and it's no longer a spectre. It becomes real, and the rest of world, the rest of us, become the ghosts. For the first time in months, those five men and women saw grass. They saw trees with leaves in them. They saw cars, and they saw colours. A plane took off from the airport, and the tall man shook his head. "I kind of forgot we could do that," he said, laughing.

All the best mountains are hidden. All the best mountains are right in front of our eyes. R

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* * *

I had my appendix removed. There was nothing wrong with it, I just did it as a warning to the other organs in my body to shape up or they're out of there.

CHARLIE VIRACOLA, ***comedian***

This friendly little line can co-operate, create super-accurate adjectives and solve 'every-day' grammatical conundrums

Hooray for Hyphens

BY DONYALE HARRISON

WE WERE IN A WELLINGTON CAFE, on a crisp New Zealand winter day. I had a fork in one hand and the pepper in the other, using both for purposes of visual demonstration. Jen, my dear friend, was reaching for her iPad to Google her refutation. We were arguing over an adverbial hyphen.

It's hard to defend getting seriously upset over a punctuation mark. But for something so apparently simple, the hyphen can be surprisingly confusing. Hyphens (-) are the smallest of the dash family, more common than their cousins the en dash (–) and em dash (—), which are mostly used for asides in sentences: "My cousin—who was an appalling child—recently won a Nobel Prize." The whole dash family comes with issues, but let's focus on the hyphen.

The common hyphen is such a friendly little dash that it's hard to imagine it causing problems. Most of the time we're using it for simple stuff, like joining the two parts of a word typed across a line break, or to link words together to make their meaning clearer: he's a happy-go-lucky fellow, it was 20-odd years ago. We use it to prevent confusion: we might want to re-cover the chair that we recovered from granny's house. Or spend our recreation time modelling a 1:20 re-creation of the Taj Mahal.

They're trotted out when we marry and want to avoid arguments over surnames, though you have to exercise a degree of caution. William Fox-Pitt is a perfectly sensible name, but William Peach-Pitt is a character in a children's story.

We also use hyphens to make compound adjectives when we want to give a precise description: blue-green sea, three-year-old dog, a tailor-made dress, the old-wares shop. They prevent confusion here, too: a fine-tooth comb is a handy household item, a fine tooth-comb sounds a bit more like an instrument of torture.

There's one advanced hyphen skill that's handy to know: compound adjectives can come in sets and it's perfectly acceptable to have a sentence such as "Differences in pre- and post-War job markets were huge." It's called a "suspended hyphen," but that first hyphen isn't really left hanging, it gets its second word with War, sharing with the second hyphen.

Then there is the hyphen's familiar use as a shorthand for "to" in phrases such as "Plant the seed May-July" or "add 2-3 teaspoons of vanilla." The only trick there is to remember not to write "between May-July," because "between" needs an "and," not a "to."

But beyond these familiar usages lurk murkier waters. Hyphens are often used in compound nouns, except where they're not. Sometimes two words are run together to make one, other times they're left separate.

And English is terrible at having general rules for when it's one word, two words, or hyphenated. The classic reference text *Fowler's Modern English Usage* gives up and says: "No attempt will be made here to describe modern English usage in the matter of hyphens; its infinite variety defies description."

But back to the adverbial hyphen and my battle with Jen, over "lightly-smoked salmon" on the menu.

I argued in favour of ditching the hyphen. In most variations of English, adverbs aren't hyphenated to adjectives when they both modify a noun, because the "ly" ending already does what the hyphen would do. But some style guides still prefer it, which—I can admit now that the heat of the moment has passed—has a logic. Time was when it was a common style, and it does fit in with the rules of the compound adjective. And even for those of us who would never give the nod to lightly-smoked salmon, the *Chicago Manual of Style* points out we would all call it a not-so-lightly-smoked salmon if it turned up on the plate charred. At the same time, since it's never going to be necessary to have that hyphen to understand the phrase, leaving it out makes more sense.

Fowler's Modern English Usage *says: "No attempt will be made here to describe modern English usage of hyphens; its infinite variety defies description."*

The only real rule to remember is never use a form that can introduce confusion. So "He plans to lay-off workers" is fine, as is "He plans to layoff workers," but "He plans to lay off workers" leaves you open to misunderstanding.

Compound nouns are also subject to fashion. Twenty years ago we were all writing e-mails, whereas most of us now email. It's hard to keep track, so just go with the most common usage in the best reference you have in hand—new dictionaries, good newspapers or magazines—unless it looks ridiculous. Noone has the occasional vogue, but most of us remain strictly no-one or no one. Usage here can be oddly random: The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* lists eyeliner, but eye-opener and eye candy.

Fortunately, the fish was splendid and all rancour was quickly put aside over lunch. Which is easy for me to say: Jen's iPad search supported my side of the argument.

BMI measures fat, but does it speak to health and fitness? The experts weigh in

Body of Evidence

BY RHEA SEYMOUR FROM *BEST HEALTH*

WE'VE COME TO THINK of body mass index (BMI) as the gold standard in measuring our fat, but there is a growing consensus among scientists that it may not be the best tool to do so. According to a 2013 editorial in the journal Science, BMI does not accurately measure the amount and location of body fat (belly fat is more hazardous than evenly distributed fat because it surrounds the internal organs) or the proportion of muscle to fat (muscular types may score in the overweight or obese range).

MASTERFILE

The researchers point to estimates that 24 percent of adults with a "normal" BMI actually have symptoms of insulin resistance and a higher risk of heart disease, which may be due to having more body fat and less muscle mass. On the flip side, about one in 10 adults with an "obese" BMI are healthy, possibly because they have a lot of muscle.

SHOULD WE SAY GOODBYE TO BMI?

That depends. BMI is a good tool for policy-makers such as national health organization when they are assessing whether a large group is getting fatter, according to Dr Arya Sharma, professor of medicine and chair of obesity research and management at the University of Alberta, Canada. "If you have enough people in a study, BMI does correlate with body-fat composition," he says. "If you calculate BMI in 1000 people, the group with the highest results on average is going to have more body fat. But for individuals, the index is almost meaningless. You can find two people with exactly the same BMI, but one has 40 percent body fat and all of the problems associated with being obese, while the other has 20 percent body fat and no health problems."

BMI's true value is in research, agrees exercise physiology expert Len Kravitz, advisory panel member of CanFitPro, a certification organization for fitness professionals. "With some people, it's a weak predictor of weight-related health problems."

Experts also recognize the limitations of BMI for individuals. In Canada, for instance, the official stand is that assessing an individual's healthy weight cannot be determined by BMI alone.

Additional factors—such as the degree of lean body mass, ethnic background, lifestyle habits, fitness level and other health risks—also need to be considered, according to Health Canada.

BMI 101

Invented by a Belgian mathematician in the 1800s, body mass index (BMI)—weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in metres—has long been used around the world to assess if a person's weight falls in the healthy range for their height and as a reliable indicator of body fat. If your BMI falls between 18.5 and 24.9, your weight is considered to be in the normal range. A result over 25 means you are overweight (25 to 29.9) or obese (30+).

WANT TO KNOW YOUR ABSI? Check out this calculator: *absi-calc.appspot.com*

NEW TOOLS AT OUR DISPOSAL

Measures that include waist size appear more effective. In fact, A Body Shape Index (ABSI), which measures height, weight and waist circumference, more accurately predicted death in 14,000 people than BMI in a 2012 study at the City College of New York.

And in a 2012 review of 31 studies, obesity researchers at Oxford Brooks University in England found that waist-to-height ratio (your waist in inches, measured one inch above your belly button, divided by your height in inches) was a better predictor of disease, including cancer, stroke and heart disease, than BMI or waist circumference alone. Both methods are currently used in some countries, but not widely.

However, says Sharma, these tools still do not tell you whether your stomach fat is the unhealthy kind. Even a measure of your body-fat percentage—determined by a body-fat scale or with calipers at your gym—won't do that. "Like BMI, your percentage of body fat isn't a good measure of health," he says.

To find out if you are truly at a healthy weight, get assessed at your doctor's office via checks on blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels and a physical exam to check for health risks related to obesity, such as back pain, acid reflux disease, osteoarthritis and sleep apnea. Says Sharma, "No other tool, whether it's a scale, measuring tape or BMI calculator, is as effective as that."

DON'T CALL US, WE'LL CALL YOU

Recruiting website *careerbuilder.co.uk* asked employers to dish the dirt on their very worst interview candidates:

- Applicant popped out his false teeth when discussing dental insurance.
- Applicant kept her iPod headphones in during the interview.
- Applicant set fire to the interviewer's newspaper while reading it when the interviewer said, "Impress me."
- Applicant arrived in a jogging suit because he was going running after the interview.
- Applicant checked Facebook during the interview.
- Applicant answered a call for an interview with a competitor.
- Applicant wanted to know the name and phone number of the receptionist because he really liked her.

On the shores of Lake Michigan, six-year-old Nathan Woessner disappeared into the earth without a sound

SWALLOWED BY SAND

BY DEREK BURNETT

THE TWO BOYS FOLLOW their fathers up the sandy incline, scrambling under and through a little cable fence that marks the path. Minutes ago, they were down on the beach, enjoying a July afternoon on Lake Michigan, USA. On vacation together at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the two families were drawn by the main attraction: barren dunes that the waves and winds have deposited on the Great Lake's eastern bank.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DOMINIC BUGATTO

Beckoning most strongly is the steep and impressive 38-metre Mount Baldy, just a stone's throw from the beach. Greg Woessner and his six-year-old, Nathan, have set off on an impromptu ramble with family friend Keith Karrow and his little boy Colin, age seven. Leaving siblings and spouses on the beach, they frolic towards the summit. A little more than halfway up, Nathan suddenly vanishes.

Colin hollers to the fathers ahead: "Nathan's gone!" The men whirl around. A moment of befuddlement, followed by rising panic. "He fell in this hole," Colin says.

There is, in fact, an opening, as smooth as a bore but not even 45 centimetres across. Greg kneels and calls out to his son, and Nathan answers from somewhere in the dark. "I'm scared, Daddy."

They can't see him, but they can hear him crying at the bottom of the hole. "He sounds so close," says Keith. They both dangle their arms down but feel nothing. Next, Greg holds Keith by the ankles and manoeuvres his friend's entire body deep into the cavity. Keith stretches out his arms in every direction, but he can't get to Nathan. Greg pulls him back, stands and looks around frantically—for a rope, a stick, anything he can use to reach his son. There's nothing but sand. He kneels again and starts digging with his bare hands. Keith joins in. Nathan is still crying. "Calm down and be very still," Greg calls out to him. "I'm coming for you." And then the hole caves in on itself, the superfine powder rushing to fill the temporary interruption of the mound's perfect contour. It's as if the hole and the boy were never there.

NATHAN'S MOTHER, FAITH, can't quite understand what Colin has run across the beach to tell her, but it's clear her son's in danger, so she sprints the few hundred metres up Mount Baldy until she sees Keith kneeling and clawing at the dune. Greg is walking downhill towards her with a stricken look. "Nathan's underneath the sand," he says, reaching for her arm. She screams, pushes him away and runs to the depression the two men have been working at and starts gouging at the hillside. Faith thinks about the Florida man who was recently swallowed by a sinkhole while asleep and was never found. She imagines her son in the dark, terrified, struggling to breathe. Don't stop digging, she tells herself, don't stop. The three adults plow furiously, sand in their hair and mouths. They are excruciatingly aware of the seconds ticking away.

But seconds turn to minutes, and the digging is the stuff of nightmares: each time they gain some depth, sand rushes down from uphill, neutralizing their efforts. Still, they work. Keith's wife, Rachel, has called 911, the emergency number. The first responders begin to appear on the hillside—police, firemen, emergency medical techni-

cians (EMTs), none of them carrying a shovel. They, too, kneel and dig. Faith prays; the hole keeps filling back in. Radios crackle, calling for tools, backup, excavators. An hour goes by. "No matter what," Greg says to Faith, "he'll go home with us. We're not leaving here without him."

More firefighters show up, this time with shovels. The site now crawls with some 40 people, all desperate to move sand. But even with the tools, at the end of another hour, they have achieved only one-and-a-half metres of depth, with no sign of Nathan. Brad Kreighbaum, a firefighter, keeps yelling at his crewmates not to quit. "What if it was your kid down there?" he shouts. No one will state the obvious, but everyone knows the survival rate of a two-hour burial by sand: they are looking for a body. Streaked with sweat and sand, Faith stands beside the hole, repeating the same solemn intercession: "Lord, give Nathan an air pocket. Let him breathe. Hold him in your arms. Help us find him."

An excavator appears at the bottom of the dune. The crowd watches its tyres wallow, sees the driver struggle to coax the machine uphill and, with a desperate feeling, watches it turn back and disappear down the beach. Another machine appears, a tracked backhoe, and its driver performs utter gymnastics using the mechanical arms to climb the slope. But Faith is terrified. "They'll cut him in half," she tells Greg.

One of the firefighters uses a rod to probe the sand before the backhoe operator carefully scrapes away five centimetres at a time. Two larger machines labour up the hill and start pulling the sand aside. News helicopters hang in the sky; out over the lake, the sun reddens and dips. Greg and Faith are ushered off the hill and taken to the police station, where they sit in their swimwear, numbly answering questions about the loss of their boy.

THE MAN WORKING the probe hits an object a few centimetres down, and the rescuers paw at the sand, certain they've found Nathan. But as they dig, he seems to sink away. More probing; more excavator work. Again, they believe they've found something. This time, Kreighbaum scoops away a layer of sand to reveal the top of a little blond head. The boy is positioned upright in the dune and has been underground for about four hours; the excavator operator estimates the depth at seven metres.

Gingerly the workers uncover Nathan's body as far down as his armpits, and Kreighbaum yanks him out, fighting back a swell of grief, overwhelmed by the resemblance to his own little boy. He cradles Nathan in his arms for a few moments, then wipes the sand from his lifeless face before passing the child up the hill. No heartbeat. No breath. Ice-cold. The rescuers drape a tarp over their heads so the news cameras can't record the grim scene of the boy's body being carried down the hillside.

At the police station, an officer tells Greg and Faith that their son has been found but won't say if he's alive or dead. The couple rush to the hospital. When an EMT approaches them, they don't hear most of what he says—they're stunned by the first two words: Nathan's alive. They'll piece together the rest of the story later: how, on the way down the beach in the bed of a lifeguard truck, the seemingly deceased boy suddenly began to bleed from a small cut on his face, evidence of a beating heart; how there must have been an air pocket; how,

at seven metres deep, the cold sand must have chilled his body, reducing the need for oxygen. Still later, they will learn that the hole was likely the vestigial impression of a rotted-out tree, long since consumed by the ever-shifting dune.

Nathan's recovery proves no less miraculous. Doctors suction sand from his mouth, his trachea, his lungs; he regains consciousness and begins to speak. Within two weeks, he is home, playing with his three siblings. The brain damage the professionals predicted never appears, although Nathan remembers nothing about his ordeal. The aptly named Faith has her own explanation for her son's unlikely survival. "God did this for us. He really does answer prayers."

WE'RE ALL GOING ON A MISERABLE HOLIDAY!

With the travel season fast approaching, many of us will be merrily snapping away on our cameras and smartphones. So at least look like you're enjoying yourself more than these holidaymakers—as seen at awkwardfamilyphotos.com

Colour Wheels

A distant memory for many Asians, cycle rickshaws are still an effective—if at times terrifying—way to get around some cities

BY MOHAN SIVANAND

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG VORE

GETTING OFF AT the metro station in bustling Old Delhi, ancient capital of the Great Mughals, I'm hailed by two long lines of cycle-rickshawallas. I pick a slightly built youth named Arun Kumar and hop into his rickshaw. Arun suddenly takes a right turn, pedalling on the wrong side of a busy main road. I get edgy. "Won't the cops catch you?" I ask.

Vinod Kumar of Allahabad, one of many rickshawallahs American photographer Greg Vore shot during six years in Asia.

"No, I am rickshaw," he replies, in his own version of English. My narrow seat is tilted down in front and the vehicle is wide open, except for its decorated canvas canopy, exposing me head-on to noonday traffic—honking cars, trucks, buses, and swarms of other rickshaws. Just then, another speeding rickshaw's spindly wheel-hub clashes against ours. Jolted sideways, I grab the canopy's metal bars. Another turn at a junction and we're safe on the proper side of the road. By now Arun is also doing his other job: that of self-styled tourist guide. "That's Haldiram's," he says. "Good restaurant. Want to see the Red Fort?"

As Arun pedals, he's often upright and off his seat, his hands straight and stiff on the handlebar. It's hard labour. When we go uphill, he gets off and pushes the rickshaw with all 72 kilos of me in it, still talking breathlessly about the markets on both sides, the old mosque, even about his rickshaw.

India once had cycle-rickshaws everywhere. In the 1960s, my boarding school, tucked away in a charming Kerala village, employed one with a full-time driver, mostly to take boys who were unwell to a clinic not far away. And, before Arun Kumar, my last cycle-rickshaw ride had been in 1986, when I travelled abroad in one! En route to Kathmandu, Nepal, I arrived by bus at a deserted northern Indian border town around midnight. "The border's closed," a friendly rick-

Ornately decorated rickshaws in Bangladesh. Dhaka is called the "Rickshaw Capital."

Ram Ganesh in Allahabad, where cycle rickshaws remain a cheap, non-polluting ride.

As Arun pedals, he's often upright and off his seat, his hands straight and stiff on the handlebar,

shawalla told me before safely ferrying me to a small hotel, where I spent the rest of the night. As promised, he was back at dawn to pedal me into Nepal and the nearest bus station.

Rickshaws originated in Japan in the late 1860s. They were first hand–pulled and called *jinrikisha,* from the Japanese words *jin* [man], *riki* [strength] and *sha* [carriage]. Gradually replacing sedan-chairs and palanquins that required more than one man to operate, they spread to much of Asia and parts of Africa. Man-drawn rickshaws were largely replaced by cycle rickshaws as rickshaw-running came to be seen as a degrading occupation.

Today, Old Delhi and other places in Asia still have hundreds of cycle rickshaws, but motorized auto-rickshaws and cars have replaced them in most towns and cities. Even so, cycle rickshaws survive as a cheap, non-polluting and effective ride in several Asian towns. Dhaka in Bangladesh, the world's "Rickshaw Capital," has been estimated to have over 600,000, and they're often ornately decorated. Call them rickshaws, pedicabs, trishaws, velotaxis, they're also a tourist attraction in Singapore and some cities of Europe and the US.

After being pedalled about Old Delhi for an hour, I take Arun to lunch at Haldiram's, where I get a glimpse into his life. He is just 22, and lives with his wife and child in a slum with no proper postal address for me to send some snaps I've shot. He makes up to ₹1000 a day, he claims, but I suspect it's marketing strategy to hike his price. "It's much more, if I get English people," he adds. He means foreign tourists. "Because I speak English." Arun sends money regularly to his aging parents back home in his distant Bihar village, where he'd dropped out of Class 6. "You're young," I tell him, "why don't you study at a night school here?"

"I'm too tired by the end of the day," he replies. "But I'll make my son go to college. For that I have to work even harder."

Greg Vore of New York photographed more than 100 rickshaws and their drivers in Varanasi, Allahabad, Kolkata, and Dhaka for his series "Rickshaw Wallah."

TONGUE-TWISTERS TO TRY

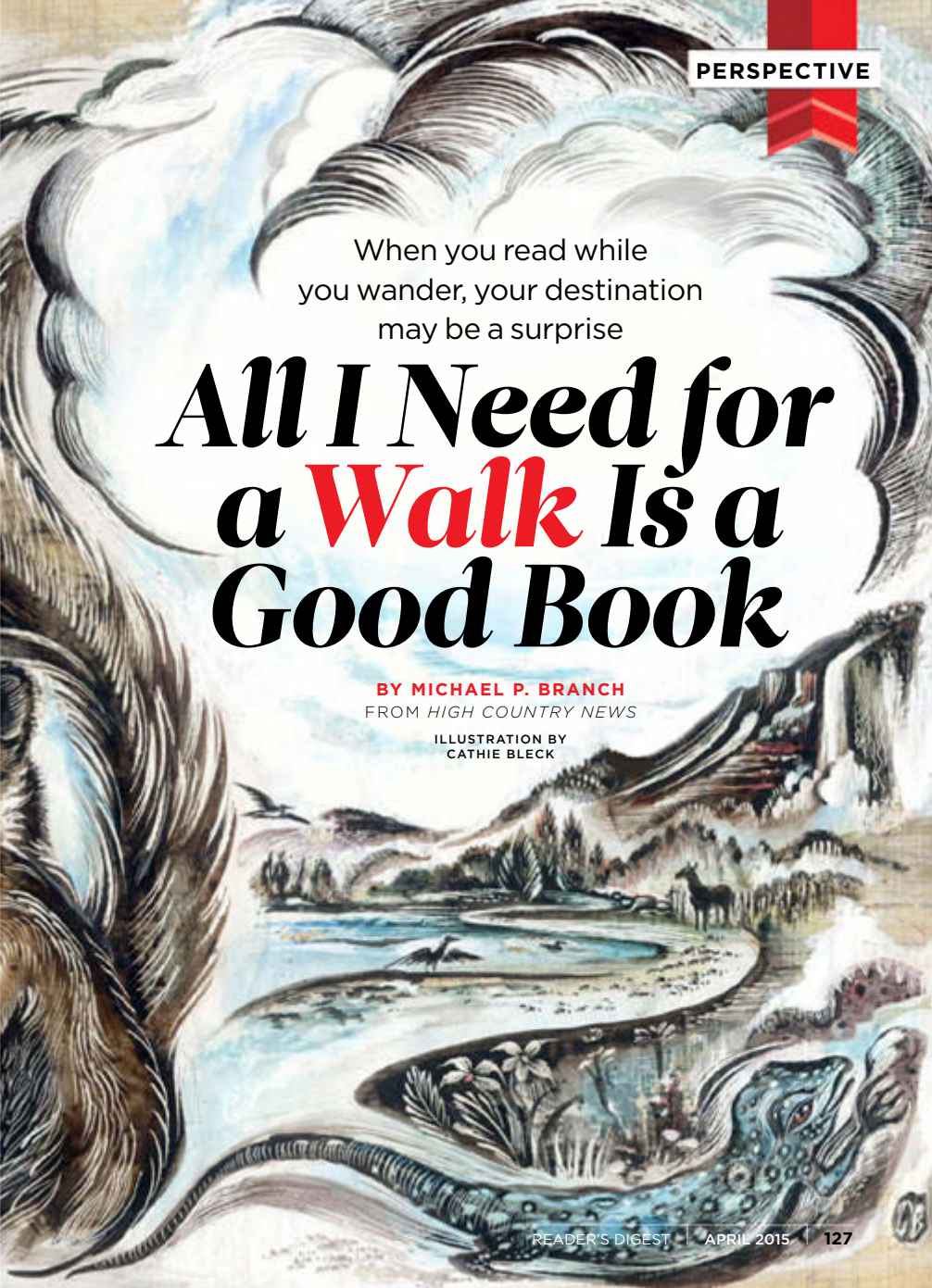
- Tie twine to three tree twigs.
- No nose knows like a gnome's nose knows.

When you read while you wander, your destination may be a surprise

All I Need for a Walk Is a Good Book

BY MICHAEL P. BRANCH
FROM *HIGH COUNTRY NEWS*

ILLUSTRATION BY CATHIE BLECK



IN THE DESERT WEST, behaviour that might elsewhere be considered inexplicable, idiosyncratic, and even indefensible is tolerated—sometimes even encouraged. But as my ten-year-old daughter, Hannah, becomes more concerned about what is normal and more worried about whether our family qualifies for that distinction, she barrages me with unanswerable questions.

Why do I correct radio announcers who can't hear me and tell chicken-cross-the-road jokes to our hens? Why do I use fishing poles to fly kites? Why have I nicknamed my chain saw (Landshark) and my Weedtrimmer (Cujo)? Sometimes I wish my kid would ask about something simple, like mortality, God, or where babies come from.

Recently, Hannah asked, "Dad, why do you read while you walk?"

Every year, I hike about 2100 kilometres around these desert wilds outside Reno in Nevada, USA, and I probably read my way through 800 of them. I became a bibliopedestrian so long ago that I've forgotten why I do it. But in search of an honest answer for Hannah, I've been excavating those reasons.

For starters, walking and reading are similar in many ways. Both are forms of exercise, one working out the body; the other, the mind. Both are excellent when pursued in solitude. Each gets us from one place to another, and yet the main purpose is always the journey rather than the destination. They enlarge our sense of the world, expanding the territory and helping us to place ourselves within it. A good book, like a good hike, takes us away from home and into a series of surprises that ultimately gives the concept of home its meaning.

Reading and walking have another thing in common: Although most of us know how to do both of them, we seldom seem to do either. As Mark Twain put it, "The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read." Might we say the same about a person who has healthy legs but refuses to walk?

While Karl Marx made some perceptive pronouncements about the value of books, it was the wiser Marx, Groucho, who observed that "outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read." A book, like a dog, is good company, and I just don't understand heading out on a hike without taking both along with me. I also like the contrasts a carefully chosen book can create with the landscape through which I move. There's nothing like being on the river with Twain or at sea with Melville or by the pond with Thoreau while I'm shuffling through the sagebrush and alkali dust. When it gets hot, I love Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams* or Rick Bass's *Winter.* When it gets cold and

windy, I go to the Hawaiian Islands in the poetry of W.S. Merwin.

Even John Muir, who is surely among the most celebrated of walkers, packed books on the trail. Muir was familiar with the "book of nature," a trope known to many cultures, both ancient and modern. *Liber naturae,* the book of nature, is the idea that the natural world is a form of sacred text and that the revelation of its meaning depends upon our willingness to read it carefully. Seen in this light, the world of the book and the book of the world are intimately related.

Of course, I'm no Muir, and I'm more Groucho than Karl. And this is a wide-open desert with a thousand hazards. It is true that I have on a number of occasions read myself into trouble while on the hoof—stepping onto harvester ant mounds or into ground squirrel tunnels or invading the space of Great Basin rattlesnakes. But most of the surprises that come from simultaneous reading and hiking are good ones because looking from the world to the page and back again becomes a game of peekaboo: Now you don't see it, now you do. One afternoon, I looked up from a book to see a pronghorn buck chiselled against a rocky ridgeline above me. That evening, as it became too dark to see the page, I lifted my head to witness the thinnest possible crescent moon, in close conjunction with Venus, floating above the summit ridge of my home mountain.

When we read a travel guidebook while walking in a city, or a natural history field guide in a forest, we are considered normal. It is understood that we need the book to recognize and name the things of this world and to prevent ourselves from becoming lost within it. As I explained to Hannah, good writing plays the same orienting role: It can help us discover where we are and reveal why our connections to each other and to the world we walk through every day are so precious in the first place.

Though Hannah insists that I'm "totally not like other dads," she seemed convinced by my reasoning. "Yeah, Dad, I can see that," she said.

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THE IRONY OF IT ALL

- The founder of dating website *match.com* lost his girlfriend to a man she met on *match.com.*
- St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was Welsh.
- The only beardless member of the rock band ZZ Top is Frank Beard.
- In several languages, like Hindi or French, *beard* is a feminine noun.

BONUS READ

I got a new pancreas, but that was just the beginning

How an Organ Transplant Changed My Life

BY JOHN FAHERTY FROM *THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER*

THE ENQUIRER/LAURA TRUJILLO

Luke, 11, visits his father in the hospital soon after John's surgery.

I do not like support groups.

The only thing I like less than talking about my feelings is listening to other people talk about theirs. But on a Saturday morning in March 2013 I walk into an organ transplant support group in room 6104 of the University of Cincinnati Medical Center in the US.

Everybody here knows sickness intimately. They talk about constipation and catheters like most people talk about the weather. Two of us are waiting for transplants, and we say almost nothing.

I don't want to know about hard times and doubt. I want to stop being a diabetic. I want to read books and take walks with my wife and see our little girl, Lucy, now 7, walk down the aisle. I have no interest in the truth.

But the truth is sitting right in front of me. She has long brown hair, her skin is grey and she looks so tired.

She says she has been on the wait list for a pancreas for more than a year. After 365 days, you have to go through the listing process again, meaning more medical tests and more judging. This woman had just been put on a "hold" because her heart had grown too weak.

All I can think is that she is one fewer person waiting for a pancreas in front of me. I never learn her name.

The decision to try to get a transplant started with the complicated maths sick people do: If John is a 48-year-old married man with four children, and he has been living with Type-1 diabetes for three decades, how many good years does he have left?

I started asking myself this question in my 20s. I asked it more intently at 30 when I married Laura and we started having children.

As the children grow older, my questions become more specific. Will I be able to make vaguely inappropriate toasts at their weddings? Will I be able to babysit their children? When will I become a burden to my family?

I began to not like the answers. The maths no longer worked.

So I made a choice. I wanted a pancreas transplant.

I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL when I suddenly felt tired and thirsty and had to pee all the time. The doctor told me I had juvenile diabetes because my body stopped making insulin. He said I could expect to have a "normal life" until I was about 30 years old. I can still hear him saying it.

I did my best to control the disease. I gave myself insulin shots for 22 years and then used an insulin pump for 12 years after that. At the turn of each decade of my life, I asked myself and God for 10 more good years. To hell with that doctor.

I knew complications would come. Diabetics die from heart disease and stroke at a higher rate than other peo-

ple. Diabetes is the leading cause of new blindness.

In my future, I saw a footless blind man having a stroke.

In my mid-40s, I was drawing blood and testing my glucose levels 10 times a day. I ate right, exercised and was disciplined.

In a healthy person, blood sugar levels, a measurement of the amount of glucose in the blood, should be 70 to 99 milligrams per deciliter. My blood sugars began dropping to the 30s and 40s, and spiking into the 250s.

When low, I could be irrational and "difficult"—the nice way of putting it. Our son Theo, in particular, understood how I was feeling. I could see him giving his mother a look and hear him whispering, "Is Dad getting low?"

More dangerous, when very low, I could lose awareness and then consciousness. I had been to emergency rooms.

The only way to stop being a diabetic is to get a pancreas transplant.

The failure rate in the first year for a transplanted pancreas is about 10 percent. I did not care. Life after transplant would require a handful of drugs every day for the rest of my life to suppress my immune system. I did not care.

"The failure rate in the first year for a transplanted pancreas is about 10 percent. I did not care.

IN EARLY 2012, Laura was hired as managing editor of *The Cincinnati Enquirer,* and I was hired as a reporter. So we moved from Phoenix, Arizona, to Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dr Marzieh Salehi at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center worked with me to gain control of my blood sugars but nothing was working. I told her I wanted a transplant.

In December 2012 I meet Dr Tayyab Diwan. He says all surgeries come with risk and that this is a long and fairly complicated procedure. He asks if I have any questions.

"If you had a family member in my spot, would you recommend this surgery?"

"Yes."

"Would you recommend he do it here?"

"There are a couple of places I would recommend. This is one of them."

I know enough. I want a transplant, and I want this guy to do it.

BEFORE I WILL be considered for a transplant, my heart is checked, my circulation, my lungs, and even my teeth. A transplant recipient must be sick enough to need one and well enough to withstand one. The results will be evaluated by the transplant

team at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center. Christmas passes and then New Year's Day. This wait is excruciating. On 10 January 2013, my phone rings. I am listed.

I start doing a different kind of maths. To receive a pancreas, somebody must first die. And that person has to die suddenly, while still healthy. In all likelihood, that means a victim of a car crash.

Other factors include tissue matches and blood types. The person has to be a donor and close. The process includes so many variables, each completely independent of the other, it feels more like randomness.

ON THE MORNING of 13 May, the day after Mother's Day, my phone in the newsroom rings.

The voice on the line is calm. "We have a pancreas for you."

Laura and I race home and pack a bag. At the hospital, just as I am about to be wheeled in for surgery, Dr Diwan walks through the curtain and says he doesn't like this pancreas. An artery to the organ does not look right.

"Let's not do this," Diwan says. "Wait for the right one."

I look around the room, at the machines, my wife, the nurses. I ask Diwan if I should just put my pants on and go home. "Yes."

From that day forward I am anxious. Every time the phone rings I map out routes to the hospital in my head. I also feel tethered; I have to be able to arrive at the hospital within one hour of receiving a phonecall telling me there is a pancreas for me.

I miss my father's 80th birthday party. We cannot take the kids on vacation. The leash feels tight.

Worse, I am just absent. I have always thought being a good dad is easy. It means being present and paying attention. I am not doing enough of that anymore. I am always preoccupied.

I desperately want the phone to ring, and it makes me feel guilty. I know somebody has to die for me to get a pancreas.

I can imagine the donor's family. Their phone is going to ring, and a stranger is going to tell them about an accident or a stroke or a suicide attempt.

I know what those calls are like. I received one once.

My sister Maura died in a car accident when I was a freshman in college. She was spending a year in Europe and had left me as her emergency contact.

So I got the call from the US State Department telling me my sister was dead. And then I had to call my dad. It was the hardest and worst thing I ever had to do. Now, every day I am hoping somebody will get the same call. I am losing my humanity.

THE SUMMER PASSES. I tell Laura that when we get to one year, when it is time for more tests and to be reassessed,

The Faherty family on a camping trip in Arizona in the summer of 2003 with their sons, Henry, Theo, and Luke

ELIZABETH MILLER

that I won't do it. It is all too much.

On Friday 1 November, my phone rings at 10pm. Laura is upstairs putting Lucy to bed. I am in the kitchen with Theo and Luke. Henry is out with friends. It has to be Henry.

The woman on the phone has a calm voice. "We have a pancreas for you."

She asks how I am feeling. I tell her I am fine. She asks if I have a fever, I do not.

Theo and Luke, apparently, have listened intently to every call I received for the past 11 months. They look at each other and then at me.

"Is this it? Is that the hospital?" I nod my head and try to concentrate.

The woman on the phone tells me to report to the emergency room.

"Go tell your mother," I say to the boys.

LAURA AND I RUSH to the hospital, and then we wait. I cannot eat or drink, and it turns out I have very difficult veins to insert an IV into. I am grumpy and anxious and my arms hurt. A nurse tells us the donor "is downstairs." I am no longer grumpy. I just feel like a jerk.

The next morning, Kathy Daley, the transplant social worker, comes to my room. Turns out this is the first Saturday of the month and there is another transplant meeting. The family of a previous donor will be there.

I walk down the hall with my IV stand and return to Room 6104.

A couple about my age sits at the end of the table. They begin slowly, sharing the story of their daughter who died in an accident five years earlier.

Her name was Ellie and she was 10. They donated her organs because it felt right. "That's what Ellie would want," the mother said.

One by one we go around the room to thank them. It is the same group from last time, minus the woman who had been put on hold. I wonder what happened to her.

When my turn comes, I want this family to know that I have four children and a wife. I want to tell them what their gift probably meant to a person just like me.

But I can't do it. I say "thank you" and stop. I do not want to cry in front of them. I want them to be happy.

I stand up in my hospital gown. When I get to the door, I say thank you again and leave.

At 10 o'clock that night, they wheel me in for surgery.

TWO DAYS EARLIER, at 4:40am, a 27-year-old woman got into her car. She was driving alone and headed to the early shift at the post office.

She had gone just one kilometre when the back end of her 14-year-old car began to slide—the road was wet and her tyres were old.

She crossed the centre of the road, at the mercy of chance and physics. She was wearing a seat belt, but the power line was just off the road.

Doctors would declare her brain-dead 12 hours later. She was a healthy woman with a strong body and a devastating head injury. A perfect organ donor. She was a wife and the mother of four children.

I see a light and hear sounds. I do not know where I am. I fall back to sleep and wake again. Now I can distinguish voices and beeps. I am in a hospital.

I want to know only one thing. Did it work?

"Yes," Laura says, "it worked."

For the first time in 35 years, I am not a diabetic.

The following morning I am in the surgical intensive care unit. I have a central line in my neck, an IV in my arm, a catheter in my penis, a tube down my nose, a drainage tube coming from my stomach. My incision is held together by 20 metal staples.

The nurse tells me to get up. "You must walk," she says.

I say hello to each person I come across in the hallway like this is the greatest day in the world. I am standing up and walking. I am not taking insulin. This is easy.

I am not permitted to eat or drink anything in the first six days after surgery. I have an IV to hydrate me and give me medicine. I feel tired but good.

Dr Diwan visits every day and each time asks me how I am feeling. On the third day I tell him I feel great; that I am not a diabetic anymore. I begin to cry and am embarrassed. He looks at Laura and then me and says, slowly, "This is going to be a hard road."

LAURA HAS WARNED the kids that I was sick, that I have tubes coming out of my neck and nose and arm and stomach, that I am not regular old dad.

Henry, 15 at the time, doesn't visit the first day. I think he does not want to see me sick.

Theo, 12, does not want to look at me, but he wants to be near me. He stands next to the bed, places his hand on my head and looks away.

Luke, 11, gives me a hug. I do my best not to cry.

Lucy, 7, looks at me, assesses the room and starts asking the nurse questions. What's that blue thing? What is in that tube? Where is his old pancreas?

Doctors are pounding me with anti-rejection medicine. My immune system is being suppressed so that my body will not reject the new organ. Three or four days in, and I begin to feel lousy from no food, bad sleep and heavy drugs. I tell Laura I feel like I made a mistake. I start to cry, again. Dr Diwan tells me the drugs will make me emotional.

Laura opens her computer and reads e-mails and entries from friends on Facebook. People are sending their thoughts. And people are praying. I mean, really praying.

A friend of a friend writes my name on a piece of paper and puts it in the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Father Tom O'Hara, a longtime friend, says a prayer for me while saying Mass at St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. The children of the Goodykoontz family and the Pichler family and the Fleury family all add me to their bedtime prayers.

> **"I have never been a person who prays, but these prayers make me feel cared for, lighter.**

I have never been a person who prays, but these prayers make me feel cared for, lighter. I don't know yet how much I will need them.

MY PARENTS COME to visit and they look so worried. I decide I need to get a mirror so I can see what I look like. It must be awful.

The kids come every night. Henry is quiet and sweet and a little bit nervous. I am sicker than he expected: I am pale, I have already lost a lot of weight. Each night Laura takes the kids home and then returns. She is always here, sitting at my bed, trying hard to look not worried. She watches everything. I need her.

I begin to make progress. Thursday the tube in my nose comes out and I have something to drink. Friday I get chicken broth. Saturday I am allowed real food. I order a ham and cheese omelette, and it tastes so good.

One week after surgery, Dr Diwan

tells me I will go home the next day. He says the pancreas is working and that my body is handling the drugs well. I tell him how awful I feel, and he says that is normal for a person who had major surgery and is on a new drug protocol.

The next morning I walk out of the hospital. The air is crisp, the sun is shining. I was nervous about going home, but now I am excited. Lucy comes down the stairs to the front door. Doctors have told me I cannot lift anything heavier than a bottle of milk for at least six weeks. I cannot pick her up, but she stands on the stairs while I kneel down and hug her. I try to cry silently, but she notices. She says: "Mom?" Laura tells her these are tears of joy.

"The air is crisp, the sun is shining. I was nervous about going home, but now I am excited.

The boys and I watch American football and I eat some macaroni and cheese, and then take Henry to his high school football banquet. It is a great day. The next day, Monday, I feel even better. I get a haircut. I go grocery shopping.

I will go to the post-transplant clinic three times a week for the first few months. I'll get my blood drawn. I will be weighed and talk to the nurses and doctors and social workers and the pharmacist. The first day, my numbers look good.

Two days later, Wednesday, 13th November, I feel weak and tired. I figure it is my weight. I have lost seven kilos in the 11 days since the surgery. I have been feeling nauseated and cannot eat. Maybe the drugs are getting to me, too.

After my blood draw, they let me go home. Late that afternoon, Dr Gautham Mogilishetty calls me. "Your bone marrow is beginning to wake up. It is beginning to make cells that we believe will be used to create antibodies to look for your pancreas."

Then he says the word I don't want to hear: "This is the start of rejection."

Mogilishetty says I need to get back to the hospital immediately. This is the news I have been both dreading and expecting.

At the hospital I learn the medical field's double-word trick. Mogilishetty tells me that I am experiencing "rejection," but that this is not "rejection-rejection."

I will be treated with an aggressive drug therapy. It starts with plasmapheresis, which will remove the plasma portion of my blood where the antibodies are located. After the plasmapheresis, I will receive a drug cocktail of Rituximab and Bortezomib which will combat things on a

cellular level. I am told this is a form of chemotherapy, but it is not "chemotherapy-chemotherapy."

I will later realize that those drugs will make me feel awful. Even awful-awful.

MY OWN BODY is trying to betray me. I get a port inserted into my chest and am hooked up to a machine that looks like it could be used in dialysis and in fact is. I see the blood leave me and then come back. I am afraid, but I am tired. I fall asleep.

The next day I am released again. This anti-rejection treatment calls for four treatments over nine days, and doctors warn that the side effects will accumulate. By Friday I can't eat, read or sleep and Lucy has a violin recital. I got this pancreas transplant so I could be there for her, so I will take her.

It's somewhere on the University of Cincinnati campus and I don't know where. Now Lucy is getting nervous about the time, and I park on the wrong side of campus. We run to the building and I am sweating through my coat. We make it, but barely. I am terrified at how much it takes out of me.

AFTER MY SECOND treatment, I begin to lose faith. I am exhausted and cannot sleep, I have diarrhea and cannot eat. I never expected to be this sick. It is mid-November and I know that if I am going to lose this pancreas, it is probably going to be now. I have continued to check my blood sugar—the easiest way to make sure the pancreas is still working. At 7:30 that night, my blood sugar is 252. It should not be above 150. Thirty minutes later, I am at 269.

Laura is crying, the kids hear us whispering and I feel like I have let everyone down.

"I won't do this again," I say to Laura.

I need to talk to Dr Amit Govil, who is in charge of my post-transplant care. Govil agrees that a blood sugar level of 269 is far too high, but he tells me I am looking at just one indicator of a pancreas' health, and he is looking at many. These feel like empty words to me. I go to bed, exhausted and defeated.

I wake at 3:42 in the morning. The house is silent. I walk downstairs and sit at the dining room table. I have a blood-test strip in my hand, but I do not want to use it.

If my blood sugar is high, the pancreas has failed and I am diabetic again.

I think about what I will say to Laura to express my gratitude and how sorry I am. What will we tell the kids? How do I explain this to our friends, all the people who prayed for me?

Then I start composing a letter in my head to the unknown family of the person who had donated the pancreas. How do I say thank you and I'm sorry at once? Will it be like another death for them?

I take the test.

My blood sugar is 103. The pancreas is working. I sit at the table and cry.

I AM ALWAYS TIRED and always cold. Each day I get up, put on a hat and scarf, a T-shirt, long-sleeved shirt, and a sweater, long underwear and pants, and go downstairs and sit in the family room. I will stay there until I go back upstairs for a nap. I have lost nine kilos in 20 days. I have a hacking cough that begins to hurt my back.

On Friday 22 November, after my blood draw, I start coughing and cannot stop. Then I cannot catch my breath. Finally the room is quiet. I am not in control of anything.

A string of doctors and nurses ask me questions. They order an X-ray for my lungs. I have pneumonia.

For the first time I begin to think I might actually die. Not suddenly and dramatically, but just kind of become a sick guy who eventually catches something and fades away. It doesn't feel scary to me, just kind of pathetic.

THAT WEEKEND, the kids don't want to make noise in the house. Each time I cough, they look at me anxiously. I had this transplant so they would never have to see this. I am a fool.

On Monday 25th November, three days before Thanksgiving holiday, I wait again for my blood tests. Mogilishetty walks into the room and pauses. "We need to readmit you. You look awful."

My pneumonia is in both lungs, and it is bad. The doctors bombard me with antibiotics for two days and on Wednesday allow me to go home.

The next 10 days are more of the same. My weight is now 68 kilos and I remain cold from morning till night. On 6th December, a Friday, I have another appointment. When I am finished I walk through the basement at the UC Medical Center.

By now I know each of the 226 steps to the lobby. But this day I cannot make it. It is only 72 steps to a bench across from a vending machine, and I have to concentrate to get there. I feel worse than I ever have.

Dr Govil happens past the bench. "Can you not walk from here to there?" Govil says, pointing to the lobby. "Today I cannot," I tell him. He says he will arrange a meeting with all the doctors on Monday. He says not to worry, but he looks back when he walks away. He looks worried.

TWO DAYS LATER, at 3am Sunday, I wake to a stabbing pain. I am doubled over in bed, and Laura begins to panic. She wants to take me to the emergency room.

I say, let's wait. I have an appointment with all doctors on Monday. When the pain stops, I tell her that sometimes I think about going off my anti-rejection medicine. The new pancreas would fail and I would go back to being a diabetic. This now feels like control. Laura reminds me that I

am not thinking clearly. I remember the person who died and gave me this gift and realize I could never do that.

At 5, the pain returns. Laura says we are going to the emergency room (ER). Doctors put me on Dilaudid which is described as "hospital heroin." After the drugs I relax, and get scans of my abdomen.

A couple of hours later, the ER doctor comes to my bed and says my pancreas is swollen and surrounded by a "fluid." This is called pancreatitis and stranding. That's all he knows.

The same night, in our home, Lucy tells Laura she is afraid and confused. She thinks they are going to take my pancreas back. Laura picks her up and they both cry.

Lucy tells Laura she is afraid and confused. She thinks they are going to take my pancreas back.

Three days later, the pain goes away and the hospital releases me. Govil says my pancreatitis was likely because of an imbalance caused by a fast arterial flow to the organ and a slow venal flow from it. Perhaps my body finally achieved balance. He smiles.

But I still cannot eat. I am six feet one inch tall, and my weight is now 63 kilos. All I am is sickness.

WHEN THE CHANGE finally happened, I did not even notice it. For a few days in a row, I didn't get better, I just didn't get worse.

Then I wake on 20th December with a feeling I cannot recognize: I sit at the edge of the bed and realize I am hungry. By the middle of the day I want to eat a cheeseburger from Terry's Turf Club. We go that night, and Laura smiles through the whole meal. I feel like an actual human being.

The next day I decide that I am going to ride my bicycle. I promise Laura that I will turn around the moment I feel tired.

I bring out my bicycle and go into the house for my helmet. When I return, our neighbour, Horst, has his bicycle parked next to mine. "I will come with you," he says.

We turn out of the driveway. Horst stays behind me. The sun is strong, the wind is brisk and I am propelling myself, dependent on nobody.

I make it all of two kilometres and my legs are burning, my lungs gasping. Horst says maybe we turn around now.

I understand now the network of people who have helped me. My family, my neighbours, my coworkers, my friends. They have brought food and prayed and dropped by. They have called and e-mailed and driven our children to school.

John with his family, posing for a photo to use on their Christmas 2013 greeting card.

After the ride, I walk into the kitchen, out of breath. Theo is glad to see me. Henry smiles at me, and Luke asks if I need Mom. Yes, I say, tell her I am back.

ON THE MORNING of Christmas Eve, Laura reminds me that we have a large dollhouse that needs to be built for Lucy. I go up to our room and open the box for the Barbie beach house. There are 119 tiny screws. My hands still shake from the medicine, and they always will. Placing the screws on the head of the screwdriver is difficult. Getting them in the holes feels impossible.

It takes me half a day and it nearly breaks me, but I do it. I am so proud of myself.

Christmas morning feels normal. Lucy loves her dollhouse. We eat a big breakfast and then the house gets quiet.

I begin to see what I have gained. I had spent so much energy the past 35 years trying to manage my diabetes, and I am not doing that any more. I had a series of bad breaks after surgery, but I have remarkable care. I have a family that loves me. This pancreas is working. I felt my body coming back to life.

On 30th December, I get my blood drawn again. Now I am well enough to appreciate all the people who have taken care of me. Three days a week Brian Lewis has been sticking a needle in my arm. He glides that needle in and it doesn't even hurt and he treats me like a human being. Today I can finally appreciate it. I thank him, Lewis smiles and says: "Nothing to it but to do it."

Dr Mogilishetty walks into the exam room. I tell him about the burger and the bike. He says my blood work looks good. "It is time for a change," he tells me.

He says now I am in recovery. I can eat what I want, do whatever I feel capable of doing. I ask if I am still restricted about what I could pick up. "Pick up what you want," he says.

That day, for the first time since I left for the hospital I pick up Lucy.

ONE MONTH LATER, *The Enquirer* arranges a photograph of me and all the people who helped to take care of me. Dr Diwan and Dr Mogilishetty are here. Dr Govil, Brian Lewis, the woman who called me to tell me I got a pancreas. People whose names I never even knew. I take Lucy with me because I want her to know them.

I am going to show them what they have done with their medicine and their compassion. I am going to tell them how they changed me and made me better.

I am going to thank them and I am not going to cry, because I am strong. And then, before I can say a word, I start to cry.

Dr Diwan says I cannot blame this on the medicine any more. I try again, but I cannot do it.

I turn, instead, and introduce them to Lucy.

For more on John's story: *www.Bitly.com/pancreastransplant*

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DREAMS OF CHILDHOOD

There were so many great things about being a kid. *Studentbeans.com* has compiled a definitive list of childhood behaviours you can't get away with as an adult, even though you wish you could...

Crying in public: Having a breakdown at the neighbourhood shop is just a distant dream.

Being rude to relatives: Remember when you could talk to your aunt and then just run off? Golden days.

Not paying for anything: The downside was that you couldn't afford anything. But then again, what's changed?

Napping: Remember when you used to protest this? Youth truly is wasted on the young.

Deciding not to be friends any more: Saying, "I don't want to be your friend any more," was a highly efficient and simple way of managing relationships.

Humour in Uniform

I HAD JUST JOINED the NCC in college last year. After our first drill session, the training officer singled out a classmate of mine, and told us that he was the best-performing cadet. The officer then surprised us all.

"Run four more laps around the field," he ordered the classmate and asked the rest of us to take a break.

So nobody seemed enthusiastic at the next drill. "Men!" our officer barked in the end. "None of you met our standards. As punishment, everybody run four extra laps."

ANURAG ROY, ***Kolkata***

WHILE ON MANOEUVRES in the Mojave Desert, USA, our convoy got lost, forcing our lieutenant to radio for help.

"Are you near any landmarks that might help us locate you?" the base operator asked him.

"Yes," said the lieutenant. "We are directly under the moon."

JESSE JOE WINGO

THE PENTAGON announced that its fight against ISIS will be called Operation Inherent Resolve. They came up with that name using Operation Random Thesaurus.

JIMMY FALLON

ILLUSTRATION BY JON CARTER

WHO ? KNEW

13 Things You Should Know About Learning a New Language

BY KAT TANCOCK

ISTOCKPHOTO

1 Fit learning a language into your schedule and keep your appointments. "A hyperpolyglot once said to me, 'The best method for learning a language is sticking to a method,'" says Michael Erard, editor of the language magazine *Schwa Fire*.

2 Make lessons fun by learning rock music lyrics or watching ➛

TV rather than reading. The more you enjoy the process, the more likely you are to keep at it.

3 Target your needs, whether it's travel, business or writing. If you're interested in food, Erard suggests studying relevant vocabulary and practising by interacting with those fluent in the language.

4 Skip the flash cards in favour of acquiring new words through immersion, says Katherine Rehner, associate professor in the department of language studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga. "The best way to learn vocabulary is in context and in use."

5 If you can't study abroad, create as close to an immersion environment as possible. Download podcasts for your commute and choose foreign films for movies.

6 Be confident and don't worry about failure. When researching his book *Babel No More*, for example, Erard observed that top learners were willing to use a language no matter what their level.

7 Determine your scholastic style. Self-directed learners might be happy working from home, says Rehner, while social learners prefer the input of an instructor and a group.

8 Start with what's freely available, such as YouTube clips or multilingual TV and radio stations, and use websites and apps, such as Duolingo or BBC Languages.

9 Listen. There's huge value in attuning your ear to the sounds of the language you're learning, even when you don't understand much of what's being said.

10 Be social in your target language. "Hang out with someone who's very fluent," says Rehner.

11 Define what success means to you. "'Fluent' is relative to your needs," says Rehner, and so-called complete mastery—achieved by only an estimated five percent of learners—is often superfluous.

12 Set themed goals and rewards for yourself: a trip to Madrid after your first year of studying Spanish consistently, or a fancy Italian dinner once you've mastered a section of your textbook.

13 Include both structural and analytic thinking and communicative elements in your studies, says Rehner. Erard's analogy is that it's like weaving a rope. "You have to weave and re-weave the right strands together so that the whole thing becomes useable."

How the Sailors Got Their Stripes

BY GEORGINA YATES

STRIPES ARE EVER-PRESENT in modern fashion. But the unisex print hasn't always been around, and neither has the nautical style—Queen Victoria unwittingly sparked the trend in 1846 when she dressed four-year-old Prince Albert Edward in a sailor suit.

Fashion's fixation with stripes finds its origin in the marinière or matelot shirt. This navy/white, wool or cotton sweater with 21 stripes (one for each of Napoleon's victory) was issued as part of the French Navy's uniform in 1858. Popular with the marine workers of Breton, the design earned the epithet "the Breton stripe". Coco Chanel then introduced it to high fashion through a 1917 collection. Still going strong today, the timeless nature of this unisex trend make it a perfect style for anyone seeking a classic summer look.

First on the shopping list is a traditional Breton stripe top. Try the Original Breton Shirt Company (*bretonshirt.co.uk*) or Joules (*joules.com*). Team your stripes with ankle-length trousers—cream or white ones really convey the "sailor" theme. For a casual daytime look, wear with simple plimsolls or brown leather sandals. This outfit can easily be smartened up with a pair of statement fisherman yellow loafers or white brogues. For the evening, throw on a navy-blue blazer—or even a denim jacket. Finish with nautical accessories, such as a striped canvas tote bag, for a ship-shape style.

At Your Convenience

CULTURAL STEREOTYPES aside, it seems you can just about guess what country you're in by the vending machines you encounter.

Sandals—Sydney, Australia

Forgotten to pack your slippers for the beach? No worries, mate. The Havaianas vending machines located in shopping centres around Sydney could be your sole salvation. While it's the luck of the draw when it comes to the availability of sizes and colours, for the equivalent of around ₹1000 you're good to kick off your shoes and head for the beach.

Cupcakes—Los Angeles, USA

First opened in 2012, these babypink vending machines stock up to 750 cupcakes, which are baked daily in the adjoining Sprinkles bakery.

Crabs—Nanjing, China

No, we're not making this up. The machine maintains an internal temperature of 5°C to keep the crabs in a state of hibernation without killing them. If you receive a dead crab from the machine, the company will compensate you with three live ones.

Gold Bars—Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Ever been out and about and mused, "Mmm, I could really go for a bar of gold right now"? At the Gold ATM in Dubai you can purchase anything from a 24-karat gold coin to a 31-gram gold bar on the go. The prices stay up-to-date via the internet and are refreshed every 60 seconds.

Grab a crab to go in Nanjing, China.

CHINAFOTOPRESS/GETTY IMAGES

Quotable Quotes

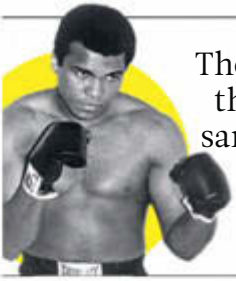
The best comics are angry people, but they channel their fury in ways that are infinitely smarter than merely yelling.

SHUBHRA GUPTA, *film critic,* The Indian Express

Self-pity will fulfil all the prophecies it makes and leave only itself. **STEPHEN FRY,** *actor*

Home lies in the things you carry with you everywhere and not the ones that tie you down.

PICO IYER, *author*



The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life.

MUHAMMAD ALI

EVEN IF YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACK, YOU'LL GET RUN OVER IF YOU JUST SIT THERE. **WILL ROGERS**

If you can't see anything beautiful about yourself, get a better mirror, look a little closer, stare a little longer.

SHANE KOYCZAN

CREATIVITY IS ALLOWING YOURSELF TO MAKE MISTAKES. ART IS KNOWING WHICH ONES TO KEEP.

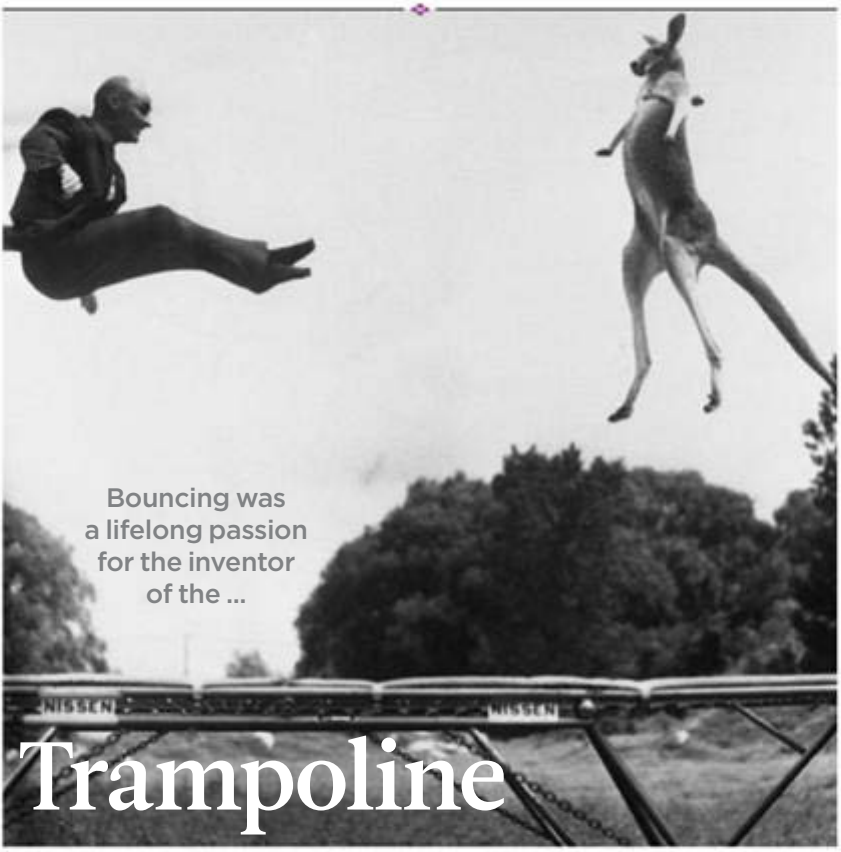
SCOTT ADAMS, *cartoonist*

If we'd known we were going to be the Beatles, we'd have tried harder.

GEORGE HARRISON

FROM TOP: COURTESY SHUBHRA GUPTA. AFP/GETTY IMAGES. DAVID REDFERN/GETTY IMAGES

Who Made That?



Bouncing was a lifelong passion for the inventor of the ...

Trampoline

BY PAGAN KENNEDY FROM *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

IN 1960, A NEW YORKER named George Nissen rented a kangaroo named Victoria from an animal-supply outfit in his city so that he could train her to hop on a trampoline he set up in Central Park. After a week of waltzing with Victoria, clasping her front paws as he taught her to bounce in time with him, Nissen finally produced a mind-bending photograph. In it, Nissen and the kangaroo stare into each

© BETTMANN/CORBIS

other's eyes as they levitate over the trampoline. The photo was reprinted around the world and helped establish the trampoline as a global phenomenon.

Nissen invented the trampoline in the 1930s, when, as a teenage gymnast, he and his coach Larry Griswold, created a piece of equipment out of scrap steel and tyre inner tubes for his act in the Iowa Hawkeye Circus. This "bouncing rig" gave Nissen the power to leap into a back somersault. Later the two men formed a company to manufacture a portable version, and Nissen christened it with a name he acquired while performing in Mexico: Campeón de Trampolín.

After World War II, Nissen toured with his wife Annie (who was also an acrobat), their baby and a folding trampoline—always promoting his product. It worked. By the late 1950s, "jump centres" became an attraction at petrol stations around the US—kids could hop on trampolines while their parents filled up. "It was a craze like Hula-Hoops," says Nissen's daughter, Dagmar Nissen Munn.

Then came the lawsuits. In the 1970s, several children suffered paralysis or were maimed after falling on Nissen equipment. "It was very sad for him," Munn said of her father. Eventually, the Nissen Corporation could not afford to insure against these claims, and in 1989 the company shuttered its factory.

THE WINNER

Rosie MacLennan, a trampoline gymnast, won a gold medal for Canada at the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Q: ***Why did you choose the trampoline?***
A: My older brothers found an ad in the paper for a trampoline club. My mom couldn't find a baby sitter for my sister and me, so we tagged along.
Q: ***The trampoline has a reputation for being dangerous. Is that warranted?***
A: It gets a bad reputation because kids are trying flips and twists in their backyard. It's like letting your kids go swimming with no supervision. If kids want to try the flips, they should be in a special program. If you do it right, it's quite safe.
Q: ***What's the hardest trick to execute on the trampoline?***
A: The hardest trick is a triple back flip with a half-twist in the first flip and a half-twist in the third flip.

Nissen himself kept on bouncing until his death at age 96. At his 80th birthday party, he shoved aside the silverware to spring into a handstand on the dinner table. Within a few years, he would have more reason to celebrate: in 2000, the trampoline became an Olympic event.

THE NEW YORK TIMES (SEPTEMBER 28, 2012) © 2012 BY THE NEW YORK TIMES CO., NEW YORK, NY 10036

That's Outrageous!

TOUCH ME NOT!

GANDHIJI CONSIDERED untouchability the worst impediment to reform and unity, stating that the whole moral basis for asking for freedom from the colonial masters would be rendered void and hollow if Indians continued to practise it.

The Untouchability Offences Act was passed in 1955. Yet, even today, 27% of Indians polled admit to practising some form of untouchability! This follows a recent survey by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the University of Maryland, USA.

Over 42,000 households across India, covering all major religions and castes, were surveyed. Questions like "Does anyone in your family practise untouchability?" and "Would it be okay for a scheduled caste person to enter your kitchen or use your utensils?" were asked. The sad, alarming results: All groups practise it in varying degrees: Hindus (30%), Sikhs (23%), Muslims (18%) and Christians (5%) admitted to the practice. Statewise, prejudice was most seen in the northern states with MP (53%) topping the list (more detailed information at *ncaer.org*).

The survey also reveals that high income does not change the mindset

PARVEEN NEGI/INDIATODAYIMAGES.COM

towards untouchability. Nor do conversions. "These findings indicate that conversion has not led to a change in mindsets," writes lead researcher Dr Amit Thorat of the NCAER. "Caste identity is... difficult to dislodge in social settings."

What makes a difference, says the report, is education. —DEVEN KANAL

IT PAYS TO ENRICH YOUR

Word Power

This year marks the 150th anniversary of Lewis Carroll's* Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. *Carroll (also known as Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) invented words like* boojum *and* jabberwocky*, and his works abound with terms worth knowing. In celebration of* Alice*, here's a sampling. Check the next page for answers.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

1. hookah ('hoo-kah) *n.*—A: staff of a shepherdess. B: chess queen's crown. C: smoking pipe.

2. platitudes ('pla-ti-tudes) *n.*—A: trite sayings. B: temperate climates. C: heaping servings.

3. welter ('wel-ter) *v.*—A: toss among waves. B: droop in the sun. C: shrink in size.

4. lory ('lo-ry) *n.*—A: tall tale. B: type of parrot. C: atmospheric phenomenon, as the northern lights.

5. impertinent (im-'per-ti-nent) *adj.*—A: late for a meeting. B: talking rapidly. C: rude.

6. languid ('lan-guid) *adj.*—A: speaking fluently. B: sluggish or weak. C: slightly tilted.

7. ungainly (un-'gain-ly) *adj.*—A: not attractive. B: clumsy or awkward. C: sickly thin.

8. livery ('li-ve-ry) *n.*—A: model boat. B: uniform. C: long, boring speech.

9. antipathies (an-'ti-pa-thies) *n.*—A: miracle cures. B: sudden storms, usually in the tropics. C: feelings of dislike.

10. will-o'-the-wisp (will-o-the-'wisp) *n.*—A: fast speaker. B: rare plant. C: misleading goal or hope.

11. sally ('sa-ly) *n.*—A: female rabbit. B: white smock or robe. C: witty remark.

12. griffin ('gri-fin) *n.*—A: monster with wings. B: horn. C: cranky man.

13. cravat (cra-'vat) *n.*—A: game similar to croquet. B: scarf-like necktie. C: two-person rowboat.

14. hansom ('han-som) *n.*—A: horse-drawn carriage. B: knight or nobility. C: chimney flue.

15. sagaciously (sa-'ga-cious-ly) *adv.*—A: wisely. B: dimly or foolishly. C: ambitiously.

Answers

1. **hookah**—*[C]* smoking pipe. Girish found a shop downtown that offers supplies for his antique *hookah*.

2. **platitudes**—*[A]* trite sayings. Our coach offered a dozen peppy *platitudes* like "No pain, no gain."

3. **welter**—*[A]* toss among waves. Heading for shore, Karan stayed focused on the buoy *weltering* in the distance.

4. **lory**—*[B]* type of parrot. Madhav set off for Australia to study and photograph the *lory* in the wild.

5. **impertinent**—*[C]* rude. "Would it be too *impertinent* to point out that I can hear you snoring at your workdesk?"

6. **languid**—*[B]* sluggish or weak. By three in the afternoon, I am too *languid* to think about anything but coffee and a couch.

7. **ungainly**—*[B]* clumsy or awkward. Is it me, or is he the most *ungainly* mime you've ever seen?

8. **livery**—*[B]* uniform. The butler's rumpled *livery* made him a prime suspect in the disappearance of our dinner host.

9. **antipathies**—*[C]* feelings of dislike. I'd say there were some mild *antipathies* between the two prime ministerial candidates.

10. **will-o'-the-wisp**—*[C]* misleading goal or hope. You might follow the *will-o'-the-wisp* of bipartisanship regarding the new law, but you'd be foolish.

11. **sally**—*[C]* witty remark. Aside from the occasional *sally,* the sportscasters had little to offer.

12. **griffin**—*[A]* monster with wings. Farhan was fascinated by the illustrations of the *griffin* in his mythology book.

13. **cravat**—*[B]* scarf-like necktie. I'm going to the party as James Bond—would he wear a *cravat*?

14. **hansom**—*[A]* horse-drawn carriage. The producer of *Cinderella* was troubled by the plan to transform the *hansom* into a pumpkin onstage.

15. **sagaciously**—*[A]* wisely. The critic *sagaciously* pointed out the logic holes in Tara's dense first novel.

A PUZZLE FROM WONDERLAND

Here is one of Lewis Carroll's small riddles in rhyme. Can you solve it?

Dreaming of apples on a wall,
And dreaming often, dear,
I dreamed that, if I counted all,
How many would appear?

Answer: Ten would appear, as he is dreaming "[of ten], dear."

VOCABULARY RATINGS
9 & below: In a hole **10–12:** Quick-witted
13–15: Wonderful

Brain Teasers

Answer these questions and reveal your inner genius.

1. Who is President of the European Central Bank? a. Mario Draghi. b. Christine Lagarde. c. José Manuel Barroso

2. Which ancient building project is alleged to have killed a million construction workers? a. The Tower of Babel. b. The Great Wall of China. c. The Sphinx. d. The Pyramids of Giza.

3. Under sailing rules, of two boats, one on port tack and one on starboard tack, which must give way?

4. The Formula 1 World Championship was inaugurated at which British track?

5. In which year did Wellington defeat Napoleon at Waterloo?

6. The name cappuccino comes from: a. The drink's resemblance to the brown cowls worn by Capuchin friars. b. The similarity in colour to the fur of Capuchin monkeys. c. The size of the cup in which it's served.

7. Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova achieved what first for her country on 16 June 1963?

8. What did Belgian-born Jean Joseph Étienne Lenoir invent in 1858 that paved the way for the first automobile to eventually develop?

9. Who wrote "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"?

10. Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 is better known as what?

11. Andorra lies in which mountain range?

12. How many Von Trapp children were there in *The Sound of Music*?

13. What same name is given to the national flags of France and India?

14. Are the majority of circus elephants African or Asian elephants?

ANSWERS 1. a. Mario Draghi. **2.** b. The Great Wall of China. **3.** The boat on port tack. **4.** Silverstone. **5.** 1815. **6.** The brown cowls—head coverings—worn by Capuchin friars. **7.** She was the first woman in space. **8.** The first commercially successful internal-combustion engine. **9.** Washington Irving. **10.** *Eroica*. **11.** Pyrenees. **12.** Seven. **13.** The Tricolour. **14.** Asian, though a number of countries have banned shows with wild animals.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Studio

FROM THE *CHILDREN AT PLAY* SERIES BY SUNITA DINDA, ACRYLIC ON PAPER, 86 X 48 CM, 2005

Through her travels in the tribal belts of Gujarat, Bengal and her native Jharkhand, artist Sunita Dinda got a glimpse of the spartan lives of the people in these regions. "I realized how little man needs to be happy," says Jamshedpur-based Dinda, 43, who fittingly employs bright colours to paint her tribal subjects. A former student of Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, she draws inspiration from Indian miniature paintings and the Bengal School. See more of Dinda's works at: *sunitasantanu.weebly.com*

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